

LION



ANNUAL
1957



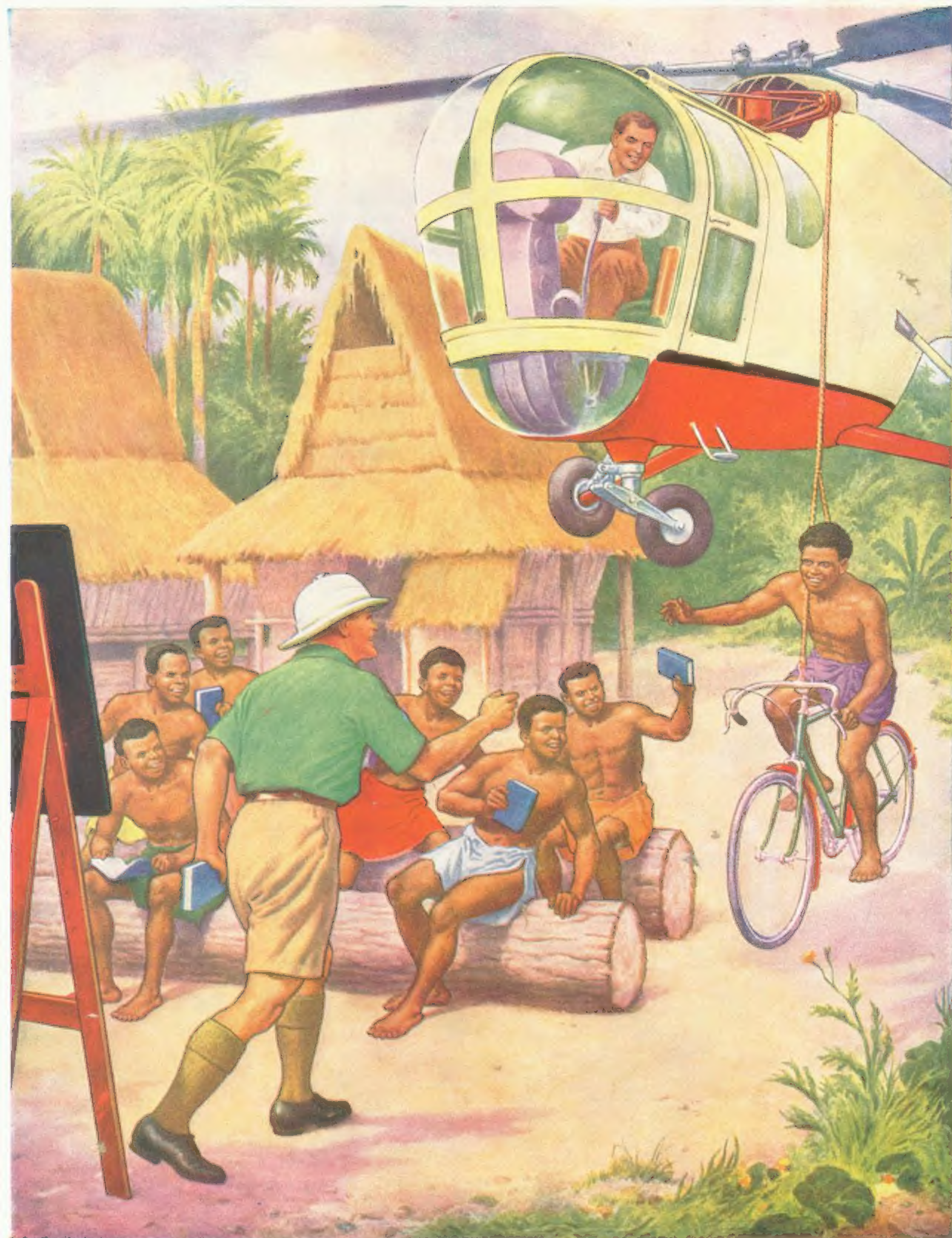


CANADA

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LION ANNUAL

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SANDY DEAN AND CO. — CHAMPIONS of the SKATING CARNIVAL

BY
BARRY
NELSON

BEHIND THE LOCKED DOOR OF THEIR STUDY AT TOLLGATE SCHOOL, SANDY DEAN AND JACK HARDY WERE BUSILY WORKING IN SECRET

THIS JOLLY OLD PREHISTORIC MONSTER WILL LOOK THE REAL THING WHEN WE GET IT FINISHED, SANDY. I FEEL ALMOST CERTAIN IT'S GOING TO WIN US THE FIRST PRIZE AT THE ROLLER SKATING CARNIVAL TOMORROW

BUT IT WON'T IF OWL'S SKATING DOESN'T IMPROVE, JACK!

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STUDY, OWL WATSON WAS USING A CHAIR TO HELP HIM TO SKATE IN CIRCLES

I'VE IMPROVED NO END THESE LAST FEW DAYS. I — OH, CORKS!

FOR THE TWENTIETH TIME THAT AFTERNOON ON THE FLOOR WITH A BANG

THERE'LL BE NO FIRST PRIZE FOR US, OWL, IF YOU FALL LIKE THAT TOMORROW

CRUMBS! SORRY, CHAPS. I MUST HAVE SLIPPED

OUTSIDE THE STUDY DOOR, GUS TREVOR, THE SNEAK OF THE FOURTH FORM, WAS TAKING A GREAT INTEREST IN SANDY AND CO.'S ACTIVITIES

SO THAT'S THEIR GAME! THEY'RE MAKING A DUMMY PREHISTORIC ANIMAL THAT WILL APPEAR TO SKATE — BUT THE SKATERS WILL REALLY BE THOSE THREE CHAPS UNDERNEATH THE SKIN! I MUST TELL BOSSY ABOUT THIS

GUS HURRIED AWAY AND JOINED HIS TWO CRONIES, BOSSY BATES AND SPIDER JESSOP

SANDY DEAN'S MAKING A SKATING MONSTER FOR A CARNIVAL, BOSSY

A CARNIVAL? I SAW ONE ADVERTISED IN THE LOCAL PAPER

THERE YOU ARE, BOSSY! THAT EXPLAINS EVERYTHING



GUS'S EYES GLEAMED WITH EXCITEMENT



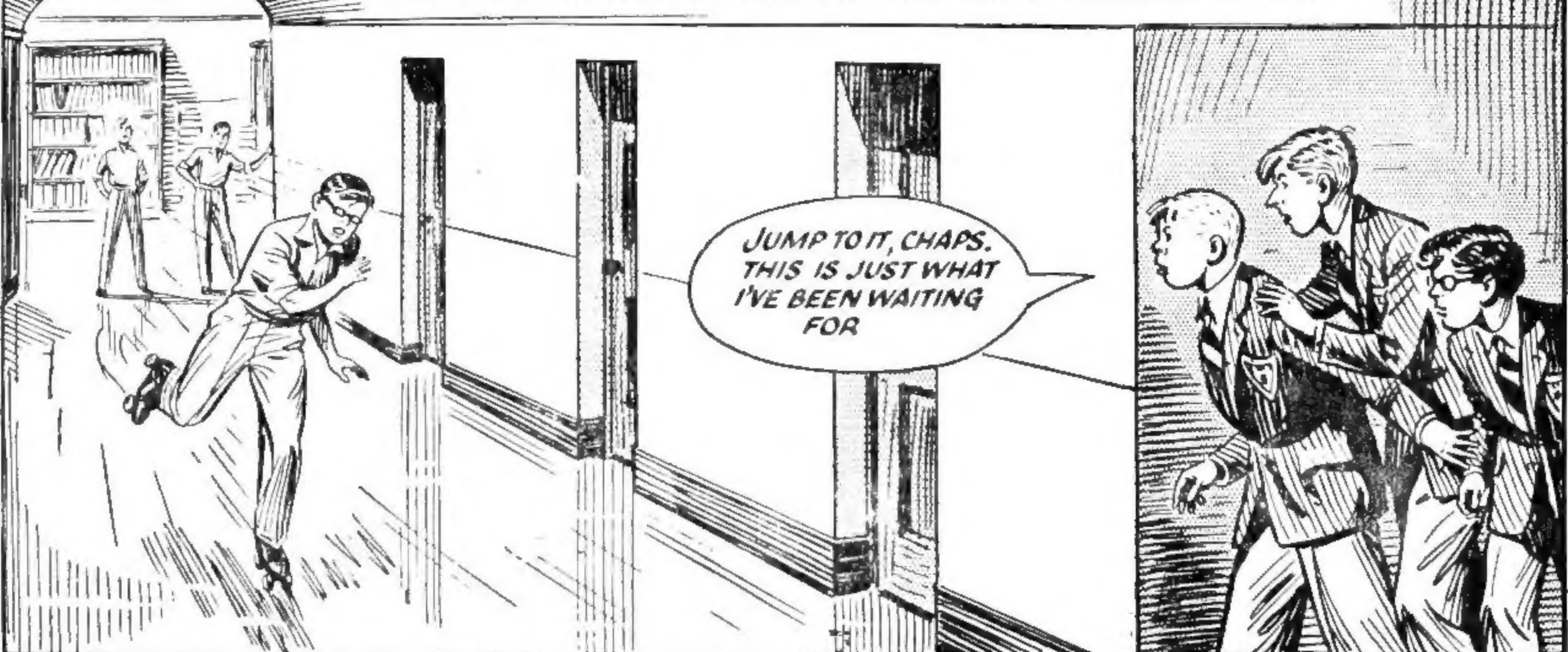
BUT THEN A LOOK OF CUNNING CAME OVER BOSSY'S FACE



FOR THE REST OF THAT DAY OWL PRACTISED HARD ON HIS
SKATES. AND AFTER SCHOOL NEXT MORNING, HE TOLD
SANDY AND JACK HE WOULD SHOW THEM HOW GOOD HE
NOW WAS



OWL'S DEMONSTRATION WAS STEALTHILY WATCHED BY BOSSY AND CO.



THE THREE CRONIES HURRIED AWAY AND HALTED OUTSIDE THE STUDY OF MR. TALLOW, A SHORT-TEMPERED MASTER



THE NEXT MOMENT, MR. TALLOW HEARD VOICES COMING FROM THE CORRIDOR — THE VOICES OF BOSSY AND CO.



THE EFFECT ON MR. TALLOW WAS EXACTLY WHAT BOSSY AND CO. HAD EXPECTED. PICKING UP A CANE, HE STORMED OFF TO INVESTIGATE



SUDDENLY SANDY SAW HIM COMING — AND GAVE A GASP OF WARNING



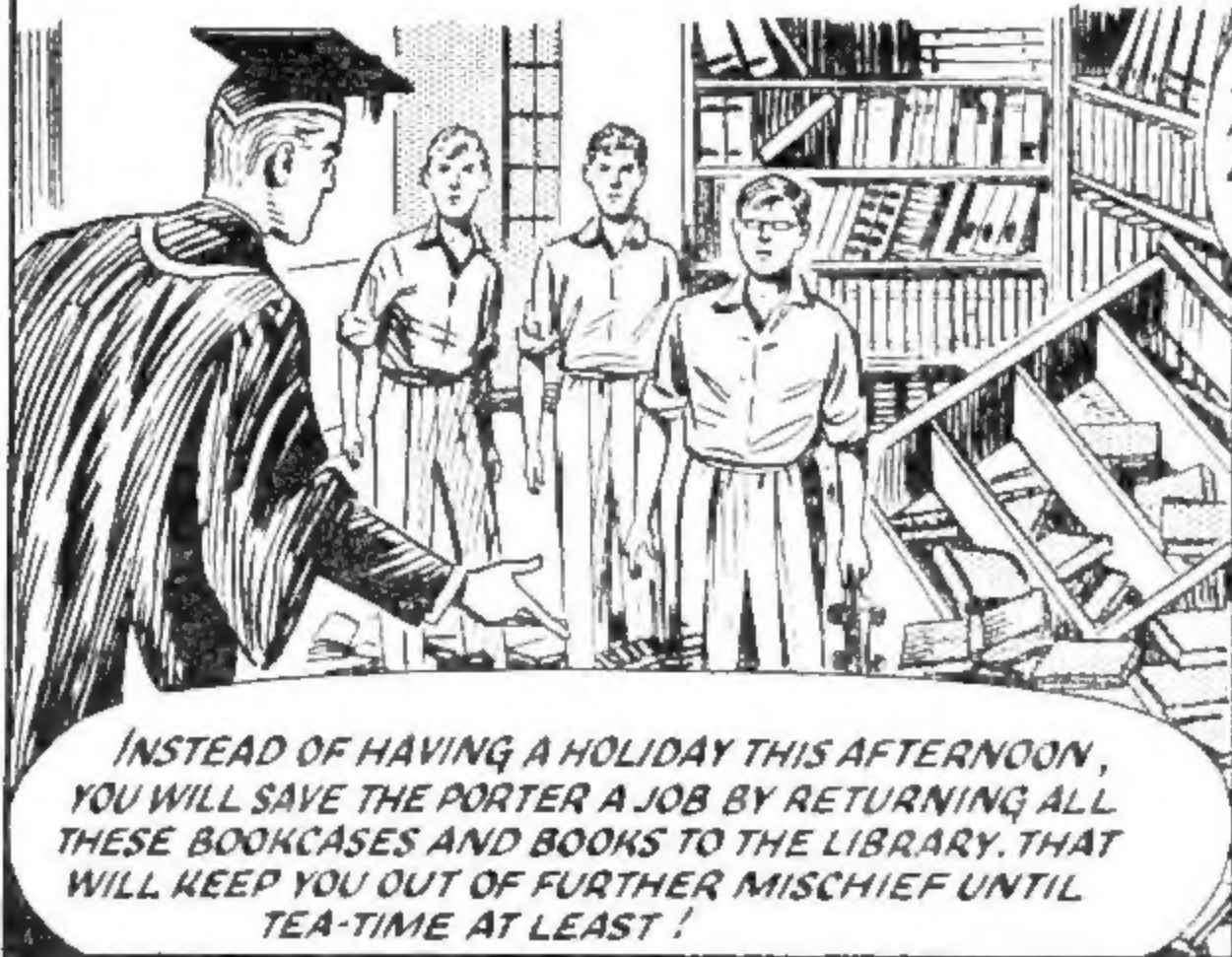
BUT THE WARNING CAME TOO LATE



FOR WHAT SEEMED AGES MR. TALLOW GASPED FOR BREATH. THEN ----



MR. TALLOW INDICATED THE HUNDREDS OF BOOKS WHICH HAD BEEN STACKED IN THE CORRIDOR WHILE THE SCHOOL LIBRARY WAS BEING PAINTED



INSTEAD OF HAVING A HOLIDAY THIS AFTERNOON, YOU WILL SAVE THE PORTER A JOB BY RETURNING ALL THESE BOOKCASES AND BOOKS TO THE LIBRARY. THAT WILL KEEP YOU OUT OF FURTHER MISCHIEF UNTIL TEA-TIME AT LEAST!

SANDY REALISED AT ONCE WHAT THE RESULT OF THE GATING WOULD BE

WE'RE TERRIBLY SORRY FOR WHAT HAPPENED, SIR — AND WE'RE WILLING TO TAKE OUR PUNISHMENT. BUT COULD YOU POSSIBLY LET US MOVE THE BOOKS TONIGHT? WE'VE A MOST IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT THIS AFTERNOON



IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT? RUBBISH! YOU WILL MOVE THOSE BOOKS AT ONCE!

BOSSY AND CO. WERE DELIGHTED WITH THE SUCCESS OF THEIR SCHEME



WHAT DID I TELL YOU? TALLOW HAS STOPPED SANDY DEAN AND CO. FROM GOING TO THE CARNIVAL. SO NOW WE CAN GO AND WIN THE RADIO SET. WHOOPEE!

SANDY AND CO. WERE FED UP TO THE TEETH. AFTER DINNER THEY GATHERED ROUND THE NOW USELESS MONSTER

TO THINK OF ALL THE HOURS WE'VE WASTED MAKING IT. AND I'M SURE WE WOULD HAVE WON THE RADIO

IT'S MY FAULT, YOU CHAPS. IF I HADN'T TRIED TO SHOW OFF IN THE CORRIDOR---



FORGET IT, OWL! IT WAS JUST ROTTEN LUCK THAT OLD TALLOW SHOULD SUDDENLY SHOW UP

AND SO, INSTEAD OF TAKING PART IN THE CARNIVAL, SANDY AND CO. STARTED WORK REMOVING THE BOOKS



BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS — THERE MUST BE MILLIONS OF 'EM! WE'LL BE LUCKY IF WE GET FINISHED BEFORE DARK

HAPPENING TO GLANCE OUT OF THE WINDOW, OWL GAVE A SHOUT OF ANGRY AMAZEMENT



COME HERE, YOU CHAPS! QUICK! JUST TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENING!



GREAT PIP!
THEY'VE PINCHED
OUR DUMMY
MONSTER!

AND THEY'RE
CARRYING ROLLER
SKATES. THEY MUST
BE TAKING IT TO
THE CARNIVAL



SANDY SIZED UP THE SITUATION IN A FLASH

BOSSY AND CO. MUST HAVE BROUGHT TALLOW
ON THE SCENE THIS MORNING IN ORDER TO GET US
INTO TROUBLE SO THAT THEY COULD TAKE OUR
PLACE AT THE CARNIVAL. BUT I'LL SEE THEY DON'T
GET AWAY WITH IT!



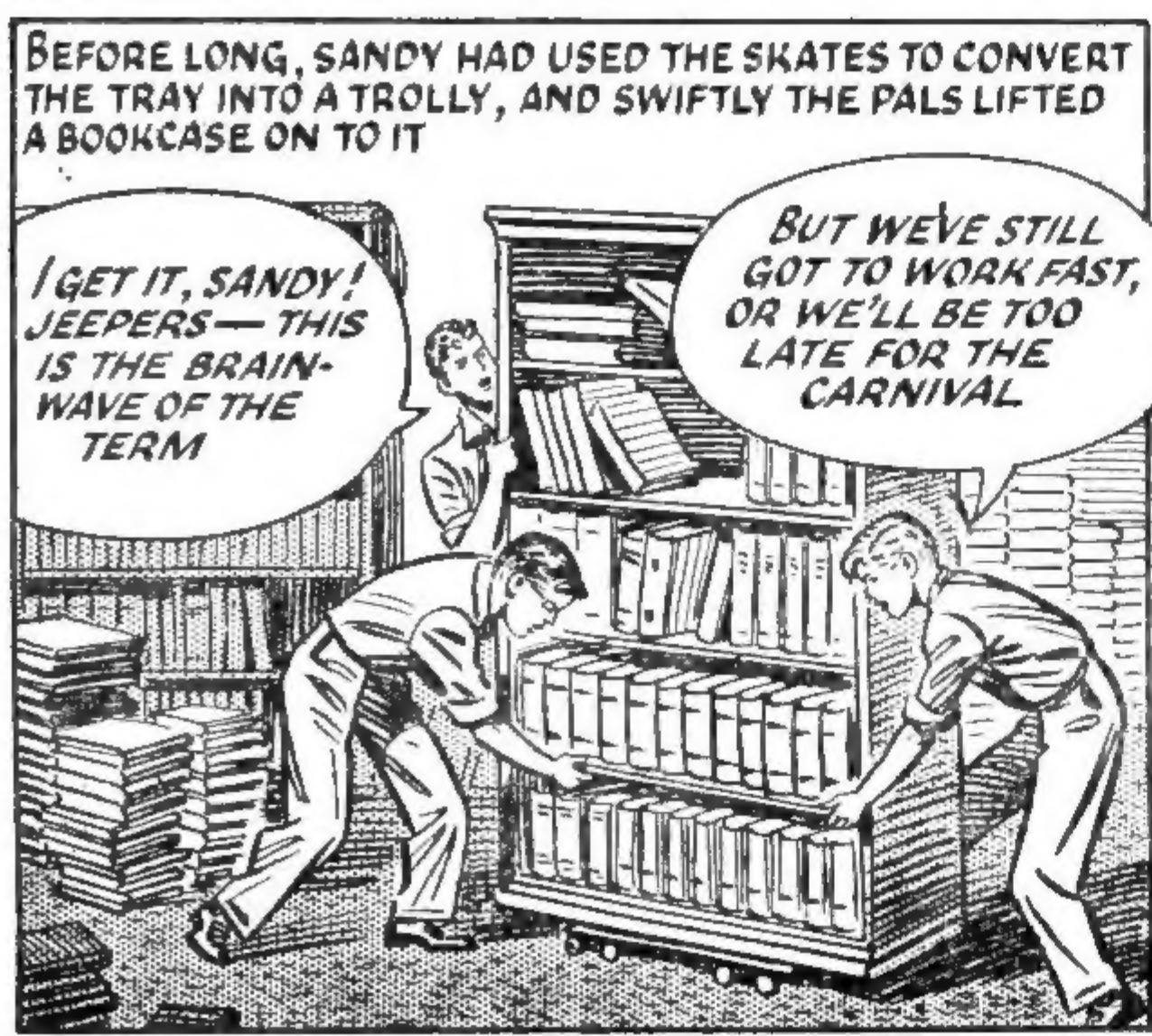
I'VE JUST HIT ON A WHEEZE WHICH WILL ENABLE
US TO PUT THESE BOOKS BACK IN RECORD TIME.
THEN WE'LL HURRY DOWN TO THE CARNIVAL
AND NIP BOSSY'S ROTTEN SCHEME RIGHT
IN THE BUD!



SANDY FETCHED THE PALS' ROLLER SKATES AND STARTED TO
FASTEN THEM TO A LARGE TRAY

I'M HANGED IF
I GET THE WHEEZE,
SANDY

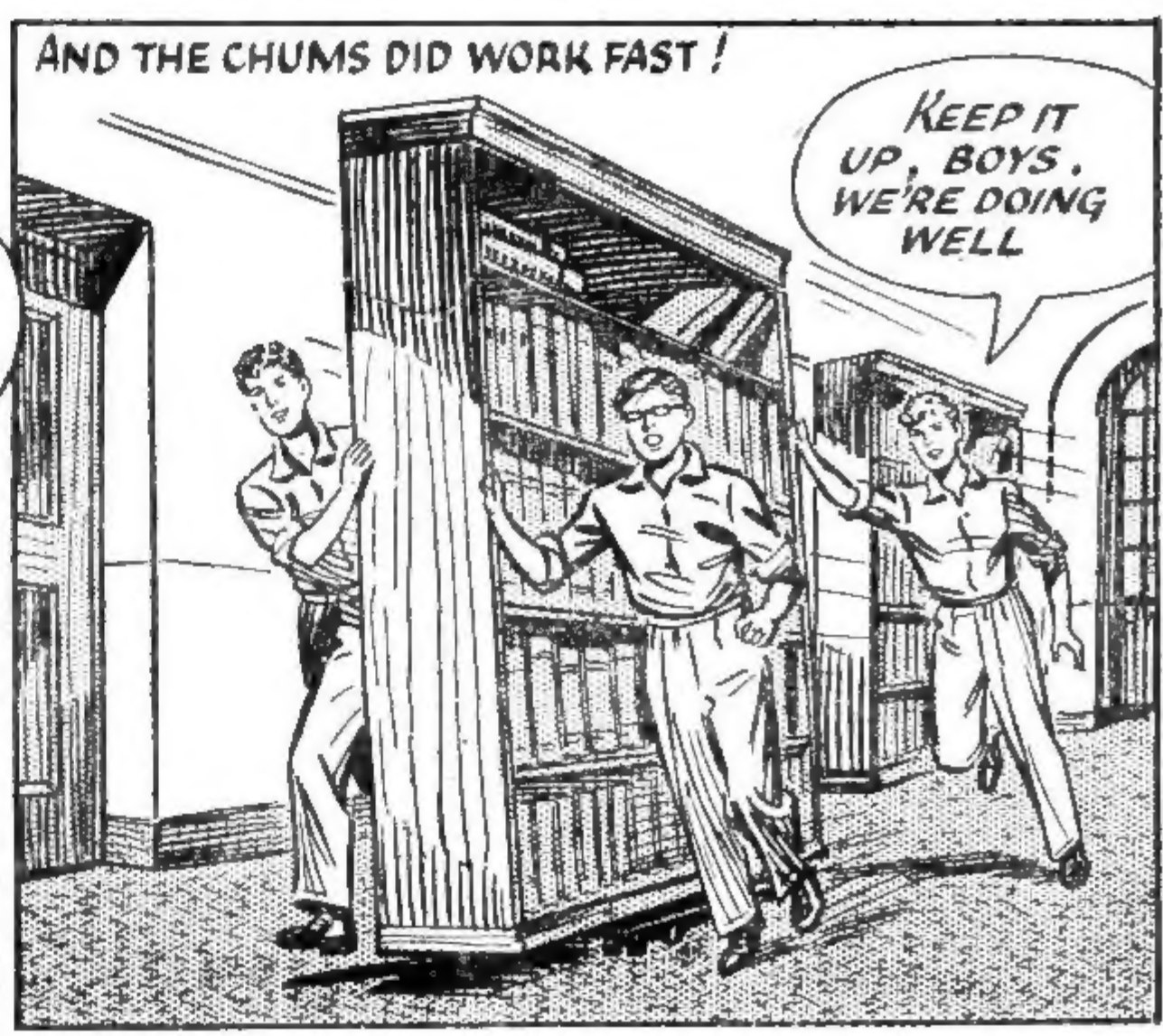
YOU'LL
SEE IN A
MOMENT



BEFORE LONG, SANDY HAD USED THE SKATES TO CONVERT
THE TRAY INTO A TROLLEY, AND SWIFTLY THE PALS LIFTED
A BOOKCASE ON TO IT

I GET IT, SANDY!
JEEPERS— THIS
IS THE BRAIN-
WAVE OF THE
TERM

BUT WE'VE STILL
GOT TO WORK FAST,
OR WE'LL BE TOO
LATE FOR THE
CARNIVAL



AND THE CHUMS DID WORK FAST!

KEEP IT
UP, BOYS.
WE'RE DOING
WELL

THE JOB WAS FINISHED AT LAST

PHEW! THAT WAS HOT WHILE IT LASTED. WHAT NOW, SANDY?

WE NEED SOME THINGS BELONGING TO THE SCHOOL DRAMATIC SOCIETY. COME ON!

AND INSIDE THE "PROPS" ROOM ----

I REMEMBERED THAT THERE WAS THIS OLD PANTOMIME BULL IN HERE — AS WELL AS A BULL-FIGHTER'S OUTFIT. THEY'RE JUST THE JOB NOW THAT BOSSY AND CO. HAVE PINCHED OUR DUMMY MONSTER

THE THREE PALS SKATED ALL OUT TO THE TOLLGATE RINK, WHERE THE CARNIVAL WAS BEING HELD

BOSSY AND CO. MUST HAVE USED OUR NAMES TO GET IN, SANDY. HOW ARE WE TO GET BY THE DOORKEEPER?

YOU AND OWL CLIMB INTO THE BULL-SKIN, JACK, AND LEAVE THE REST TO ME

SANDY REMOVED HIS OVERCOAT, REVEALING THE BULL-FIGHTER'S COSTUME. HE HAD ALSO BROUGHT A COLOURED TABLECLOTH

NOW FOR THE FUN AND GAMES!

MEANWHILE, INSIDE THE SCROUNGED DUMMY MONSTER, BOSSY AND CO. WERE PUTTING ON THEIR ACT — WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS

PEP IT UP, CAN'T YOU!

PUT SOME LIFE INTO IT!

WHY DON'T YOU MAKE US LAUGH?

THROW 'EM OFF AND BRING ON THE NEXT TURN!

THE RINK DOOR-KEEPER GOGGLED AS SANDY AND CO. SKATED PAST HIM



BOSSY AND CO.'S PERFORMANCE WAS STILL GOING DOWN BADLY

STICK A PIN IN IT. IT'S GOING TO SLEEP

THE GUYS INSIDE IT CAN'T SKATE FOR NUTS



AND THEN — SANDY AND CO. APPEARED



BEFORE BOSSY AND CO. REALISED WHAT WAS HAPPENING, THE BULL BROKE INTO A CHARGE — ENTICED BY SANDY



AND A MOMENT LATER---



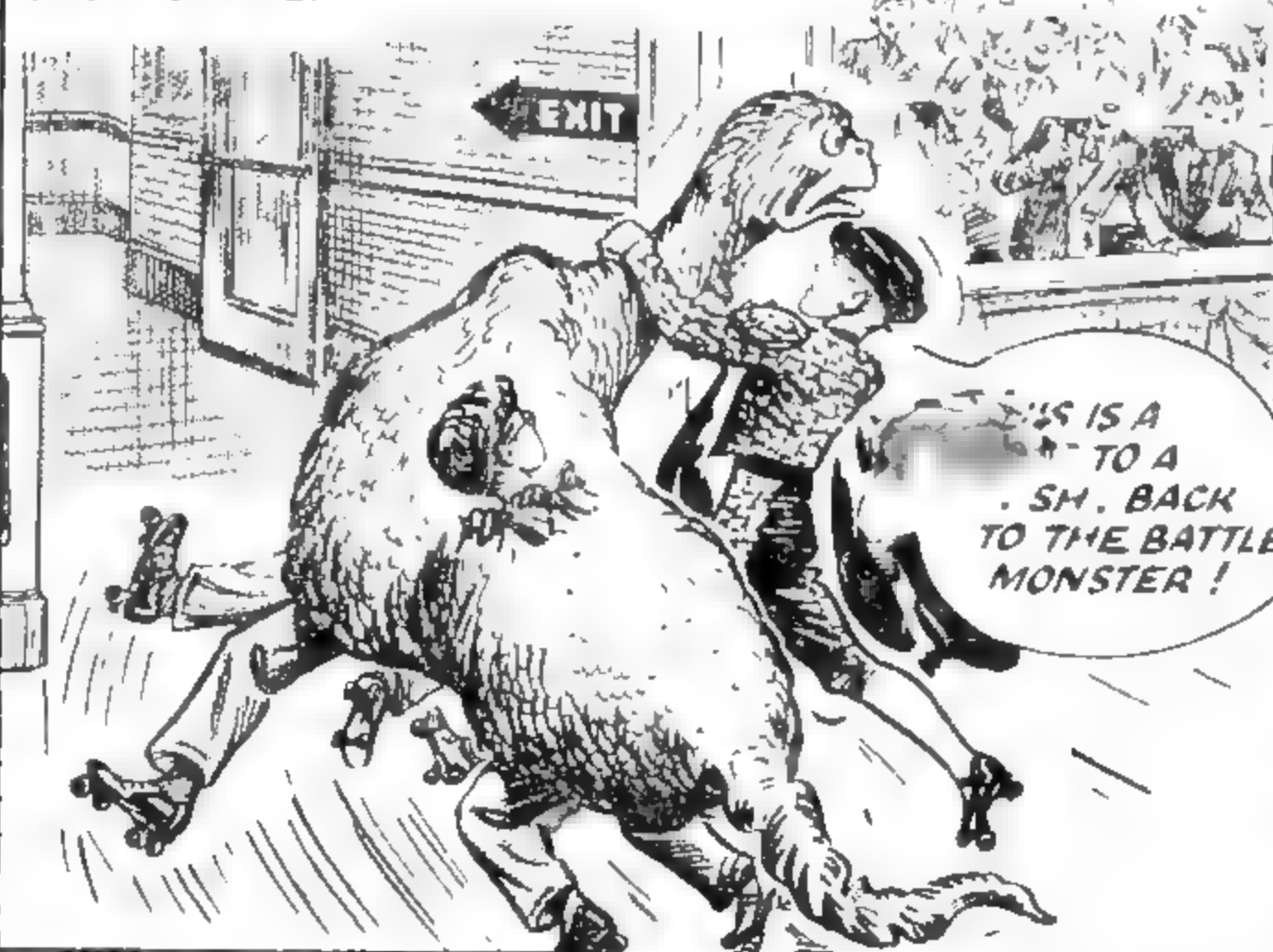
NO SOONER DID THE MONSTER SORT ITSELF OUT THAN THE BULL CHARGED AGAIN



ALL AT ONCE, GUS'S HEAD APPEARED THROUGH A HOLE. INSTANTLY HE GAVE A HOWL OF ALARM



BOSSY AND CO. TRIED TO BEAT A RETREAT, BUT SANDY WAS TOO QUICK FOR THEM



IT WAS THEN THAT THE BULL BROUGHT OFF THE BEST CHARGE OF THE DAY



AND THAT WAS THE FINISH OF THE PREHISTORIC MONSTER



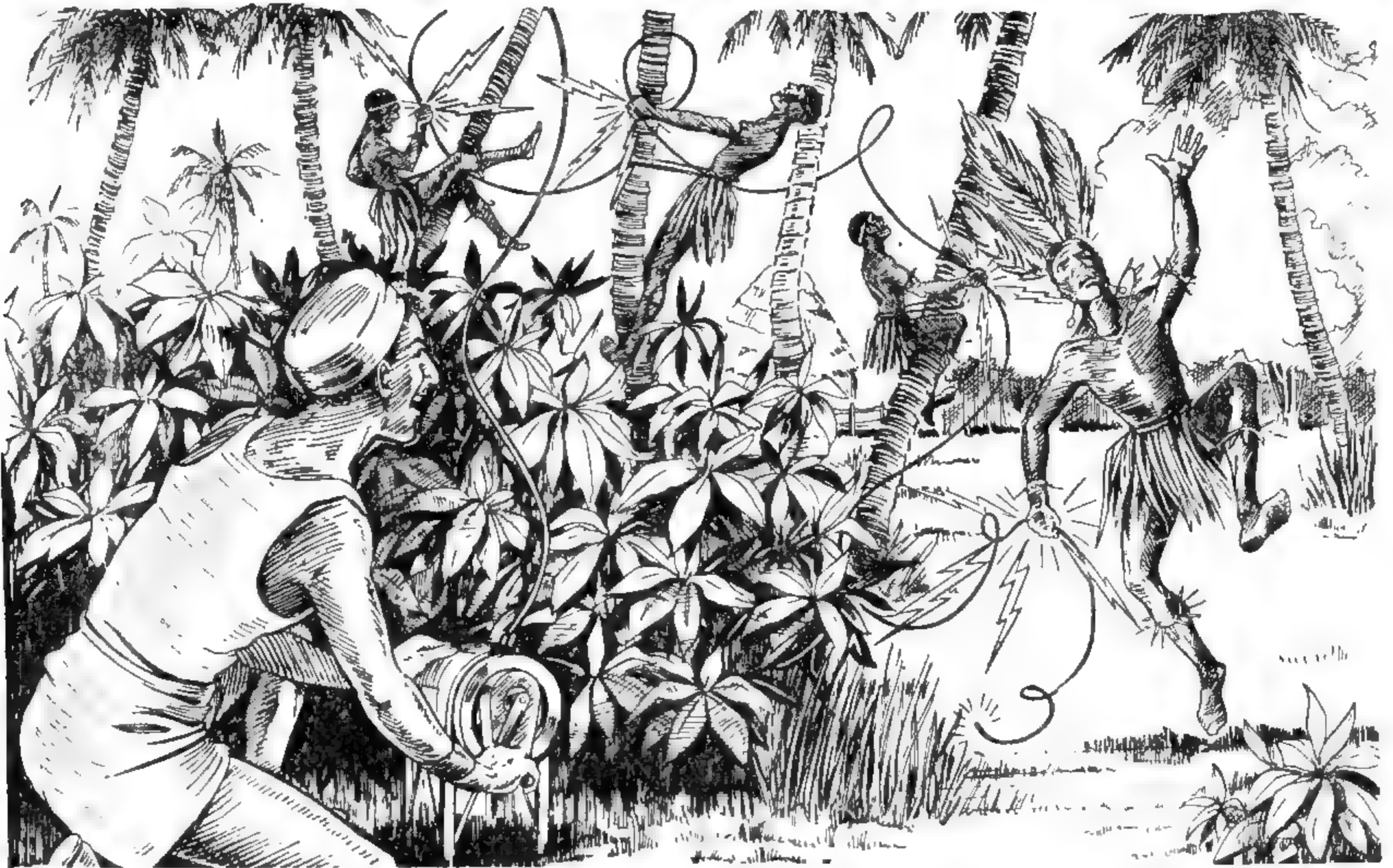
BOSSY AND CO. WERE STILL IN A TANGLE WHEN THE RADIO SET WAS HANDED TO SANDY



THE END

KULU THE ZULU

BY
GEORGE
IRELAND



WIRE-STEALERS AT WORK

IN a straight line across the sun-baked veld of South Africa lumbered the huge shape of a great bull elephant.

Trundling behind the tusker was a small cart. In it sprawled Kulu, the Zulu telephone linesman. He was sound asleep on the battered boxes holding his repair gear. Over his head a big fly whisk jerked backwards and forwards with every turn of the right hand wheel. Kulu liked comfort when he travelled.

The copper wires of the main trunk lines glinted almost directly overhead, for Kulu had trained Tiny the tusker to follow the lines which it was his duty to service. It gave Kulu more time to sleep, for the Zulu believed that the only thing better than one hour's "shut-eye" was two.

"Woo-oo-ee!"

The tusker halted suddenly and threw up his trunk in a shrill blast. Then he trumpeted again.

"Allaright, allaright," Kulu muttered as he blinked open his eyes. "I hear you first time."

Agilely he slipped to the ground and stared upwards.

The copper wires of the trunk lines no longer

passed overhead. One post leaned drunkenly. The next had been knocked flat to the ground.

"Elephant!" snorted Kulu. "Tiny, your family give me too much trouble. All the time they rub my posts and knock down. How I keep lines going?"

Tiny rumbled down his trunk as Kulu strode to the nearest post to see what other damage had been done. Probably the insulators would be broken. The wire, too, might be parted, though the mere fact of them being on the ground would be enough to break the connection, for they would be earthed. Kulu had, of course, known that there was a break in the line.

The wires had been pulled away from the insulators. From the end of the post, Kulu circled round, expecting to find the loose wires on the ground. But as his circle widened a frown of perplexity furrowed his dark forehead.

"Wires gone," he muttered. "Must be round elephant leg. He drag away."

His eyes scanned the hard-baked ground for the tracks of elephants. Then, to his amazement, he realised there were no elephant tracks!

Suspicion began to dawn in his eyes as he hurried

He Proves It Doesn't Pay to Tamper with His Jungle 'Phone Wires!

to the nearest post and stooped to examine the end of the wires at the insulator.

"Ha!" he snapped. "This not work of elephant. These wires be cut, not pulled apart. This be work of man. I smell Wambusi."

The wandering Wambusi tribe had given Kulu trouble before. The men and the women of the tribe valued the heavy copper wire, which they used for bangles and other ornaments. Though they had been punished before for pulling down the lines and stealing wire, they continued to do so whenever their wanderings brought them to the telephone lines.

Kulu connected up his small portable 'phones to the ends of a line and reported to headquarters. Almost at once a look of apprehension crossed his face. For at the other end of the line was Marchbanks Bwana, the supervisor.

Kulu would, and had done, face a charging lion with only a spear in his hand; he would swim a crocodile-infested river without a second thought; he would even defy a juju man if duty demanded it. But when Marchbanks spoke, Kulu went cold inside. Even on the telephone it was the same.

"So you've found the break?" snapped the voice of the supervisor. "It's about time, too, you idle rascal. The repairs should have been finished this morning. You've been sleeping again in that cart of yours. If that repair isn't completed by morning, don't bother to come back."

Kulu almost bowed to the sharp-tempered voice that crackled at him from the earphones.

"Yes, bwana—no, bwana—yes, bwana," he murmured from time to time.

At last the receiver at the other end was slammed down, and with a sigh of relief, Kulu turned to his cart for the coil of spare wire and his tools.

As he swung the heavy coil over his shoulder a sudden thought occurred to him.

Would it be long enough?

Swiftly he paced out the distance between the two ends of the broken lines. With mounting alarm he realised he had just about half the wire he needed for the job. He would have to phone Bwana Marchbanks and tell him.

At the thought, Kulu's eyes rolled. Marchbanks Bwana would be more than angry. He would be furious. The last thing Kulu wanted to do was to speak again to the supervisor.

But without wire Kulu could not make the repairs, and there was no wire nearer than headquarters.

Then Kulu remembered something, and gave a whoop of relief.

"Wambusi got wire," he said. "I get back from them. Ho-ay, Tiny, we make trek quick time."

Kulu's mind was made up. He would sooner face the spears of the Wambusi than the anger of Marchbanks Bwana!

WAMBUSI TREACHERY

FOLLOWING the Wambusi was no easy matter. The nomad tribe, knowing that they had done wrong, had done their utmost to cover up their tracks. But Kulu's veld-skilled eyes picked up the trace of a faint footprint here, a bent wisp of dried grass there, or a tiny tuft of cured hide in a thorn-bush elsewhere.

With Tiny following on his heels like a giant bloodhound, Kulu made his way quickly over the veld.

After a couple of miles the Wambusi were less careful about their tracks, and Kulu was able to mount Tiny's broad back and direct the tusker from that point of vantage. They made better speed then, for Tiny could keep up a steady ten miles an hour without effort.

But after a while Kulu was forced to halt the tusker. The Wambusi had been cleverer than he had expected.

Ahead lay a long reach of flat rock, sun-baked and smooth. On it no tracks would show. And the Wambusi had plainly made for the rock, which stretched for at least a mile and a half, to throw possible pursuers off their trail.

"We go round, Tiny," Kulu said. "Maybe we pick up tracks round edge."

But to go round, he reflected, would take perhaps an hour and a half. By that time it would be dark.

And the Wambusi could have turned off in any direction. They might even have come back off the rock at the same place!

The only way Kulu could be sure of picking up their tracks quickly was to follow them across the rock. But how could he do that if no tracks showed on the rock?

Kulu's eyes brightened suddenly, and he slid down Tiny's trunk to the ground. He had just remembered a tracking tip he had learned from one of the little yellow Bushmen, whose life is spent in the desert.

He stepped on to the rock at the point where the Wambusi had mounted it, then began to work his way across it on hands and knees. Every foot he progressed, he blew hard on the rock.

For lichen grew on the rock, tiny dried plants hardly visible to the eye, yet living plants with their roots in the pores of the rock itself.

And where the Wambusi had stepped, their feet had powdered the dried lichen. With each puff that Kulu blew a tiny cloud of powdered lichen rose. When he veered from the track, there was no dust.

Slowly and painfully Kulu worked his way across the rock. Tiny followed, grunting sometimes in protest as the hot rock burned the tender pads of his feet. But at last they were on the veld again, following the plainer tracks of the Wambusi towards tree-covered country.

Kulu grinned as he saw the lights of cooking fires gleaming faintly from amongst the trees.

"They think they safe now," he muttered grimly. "They think no one can follow. They soon learn."

The Wambusi were so confident that they had shaken off any possible pursuers that they had not even set sentries. When Kulu rode in among them they were taken completely by surprise.

"Evil and worthless dogs," Kulu roared as he slid to the ground, from the back of Tiny. "Give me back my wire."

His quick eyes looked swiftly around the encampment. He could see no sign of the bulky coil the wire must have made, but he felt pretty sure that the thieves had not yet cut it up. They had not had time, and there had been no copper filings anywhere on the track.

"My wire," he repeated. "Give me the wire you stole."

"Wire?" whined an old man, whom Kulu knew to be Nagate, the chief. "We know naught of wire? What is the wire you speak of?"

Kulu saw a mocking light in the old man's eyes.

"You know what wire" thundered the Zulu. "The wire of the great line that goes buzz-buzz like many bees. The wire of the white man's talking machine that crosses the veld and whose servant I am!"

Whined Nagate — "What would we know of this wire? "If you trust us not, search our camp."

Kulu's face hardened. If Nagate was willing to allow the camp to be searched it could only mean one thing. The wire was not in the camp. The Wambusi must have hidden it. Nevertheless, Kulu searched the place thoroughly, watched by the sullen-faced tribesmen.

"Now are you satisfied that it is not here and we did not take it?"

There was a leer of triumph on Nagate's face.

Kulu was thinking quickly. What possible hiding-place could the Wambusi have found for the wire? Then his eye caught a glance from one of the younger Wambusi. The man was looking towards the fire. Kulu suppressed a start, and faced the chief calmly.

"There is one place where

the wire might lie hidden, old man. Put out that fire."

Ignoring the protests of the chief Kulu snatched an assegai from a Wambusi warrior, and began to scatter the blazing timbers aside. Then he began to dig in the earth with the assegai. Hardly a foot beneath the surface his spear clinked on something metallic.

"The wire is here" he cried, stepping back. "Make the young men dig it up, Nagate, and tell them to make haste, or there will be anger in the white men's hearts."

As the Wambusi reluctantly began to dig up the coil of wire, Kulu had an idea.

"Indeed it is fortunate for you I found this wire," he told the chief. "For I must tell you that the white men use juju wire, and strange and terrible are the curses on those who steal it."

With the intention of scaring the Wambusi off stealing wire again he went on impressively: "Saw you not how swiftly I came up with you and how I found the wire though it was so well hid? How would that be if it were not juju?"

He broke off. The young men had suddenly stopped digging, and were gazing at something behind Kulu. Swiftly Kulu swung round.

"Wheee!"



It seemed that Kulu was heading for certain death when he charged towards the hostile tribesmen. But to their amazement he "pole-vaulted" clean over their heads!

There was a sudden shrill trumpet of fear from Tiny, and Kulu had a glimpse of the great beast charging towards him.

"Stop, Tiny! Halt!" roared Kulu as he darted nimbly aside.

But to Kulu's amazement, Tiny thundered past, ignoring him completely.

OUTWITTING THE ENEMY

IT was not until the tusker had crashed off into the jungle that Kulu saw the reason for his sudden charge.

A Wambusi warrior held a small yapping dog in his arms, just behind where Tiny had stood. The dog's shrill barking had set the tusker into motion, for there is nothing an elephant fears so much as a barking dog.

Furiously Kulu rushed towards the man, but suddenly halted as a circle of assegai heads bristled before him. Others of the Wambusi darted forward with their weapons.

Kulu's eyes narrowed.

"What means this, Nagate?" he demanded.

Smirking, the old chief came forward.

"O Kulu," he leered, "if you go from this place you will tell the white men who took their wire and they will punish us. So you shall not go from this place."

Though his muscles were taut, Kulu kept his voice calm.

"The white men do not look gladly on those who kill," he said.

Nagate grinned evilly.

"They will not know who killed," he said.

"An elephant's feet tread hard, and there will be little left to show that assegais pierced you before you were crushed beneath the pads of your own beast. It will seem like an accident, for your little cart will be crushed and scattered."

Kulu's jaw hardened as he understood Nagate's plot. It would be easy for the Wambusi to catch Tiny, for the great beast was very tame. And if they made Tiny walk over Kulu's body there would indeed be little left to show how the linesman had met his end.

"It is a good plan," nodded Kulu, "but it has one flaw."

"And what is that?" sneered Nagate.

"To kill me you must first catch me," Kulu thundered.

As he spoke his grip tightened on the assegai he held, and he sprang towards the nearest of the Wambusi warriors. Their assegais went back to lunge at him while they crouched behind their shields so that Kulu could not strike at them.

But that was not Kulu's intention!

At the last moment the point of his assegai went down, biting into the ground. His intention was to use the long handle as a vaulting pole!

The next moment he was rising in the air. Up and over he threw himself. High over the crouching Wambusi he vaulted.

"Up! Strike up!" screamed Nagate.

He was too late. Kulu cleared the ring of spears, and his long legs carried him into the cover of the trees ahead of the shower of assegais that followed him.

"After him!" screamed Nagate.

Kulu smiled grimly. Before he had become a linesman, he had been a messenger, carrying letters across the veld. He could out-run a horse over a distance. The Wambusi would never catch him.

For ten minutes he ran at his best speed. When at last he halted he could not even hear the Wambusi.

"Now I get Tiny," he said. "And then I get back wire too, and punish Wambusi."

From a peepul tree he cut a long strip of bark which he shaped into a trumpet and put to his lips.

"Woo-oo-oooo!"

A long wail burst from the trumpet's mouth. After he had repeated it, it was echoed in the distance and then closer. Tiny had heard his master and was coming to him.

The tusker was still shaking nervously when Kulu found him. The Zulu soothed the great beast with gentle words and swung him round to head for the trunk line.

"We both O.K." he said. "Now we ring headquarters and——"

He broke off. He had just remembered that phoning headquarters meant speaking to Marchbanks Bwana. And the line was not yet mended.

"I no tell him I fail" he muttered. "I got to get wire—Kulu not finish with Wambusi yet."

Grimly he swung Tiny round to head back towards the Wambusi camp.

KULU'S MYSTERY JUJU

NO beast can move more silently than an elephant when it wishes. Its great bulk can slide through the densest thickets with hardly the rustle of a leaf.

Despite the sentries that they had now placed, the Wambusi had no inkling of Tiny's approach. When he was close enough, Kulu halted the tusker and swarmed silently up a tree. A branch hung over the clearing. Kulu edged his way along this until he was almost above the Wambusi gathered in council there.

"Certainly the Zulu will be back," Nagate was saying, "And certainly he will bring the white men and their police. But what have we to fear? If the wire is not here, what can they do?"

"But the Zulu will have told them we have the wire," objected one young Wambusi.

"No matter" sneered the chief. "It is the white man's law that there must be proof. If they do not

find the wire there is no proof, and they cannot punish us."

"And where do we hide the wire?" asked another young warrior. "In another hole in the ground?"

Nagate shook his head.

"There will be trackers with the white men," he said. "They would find any hole we made. I have a better plan. Follow me."

He led them to a nearby stand of tall karula trees. Their tall, straight trunks rose high to a spreading crown of branches, interwoven high above the ground.

"Up with you," he ordered, "String out the wires among the branches, but leave no marks on the tree trunks to show that you have climbed."

With ropes of creepers slung round the trunks and then around their bodies, some of the young Wambusi "walked" up the nearest tree, their backs braced against the ropes. They heaved the wire up after them, uncoiling it as they went.

"Not even the trackers will find it now," boasted Nagate. "We will make a trail leading from here, so that the trackers will think we did but pass the trees. They will search for the wire but they will search in vain. And doubtless when the searching is over the white men will beat the Zulu for bringing them on a fool's errand."

Kulu smiled grimly as he heard the words, for he had followed the Wambusi and sat, on Tiny's neck, barely twenty yards from Nagate. It would have been easy for him to order Tiny forward and snatch up the chief.

But Kulu was determined to teach the Wambusi a lesson they would never forget.

He slid swiftly from the tusker's back and darted to his cart. He took out a small case which contained a compact hand-operated generating set used to detect flaws in wiring.

Leaving the generator on the ground, Kulu took the long wire lead from it and whispered some orders into Tiny's ears. The tusker's trunk curled round his waist and lifted him high into the branches of the nearest karula tree. The Wambusi had fastened one end of the wire to a branch of this tree and had swung to the next tree, where they were hauling up more of the wire and stringing it out among the branches.

Kulu attached the lead from his generators to the bare copper wire of the stolen telephone line. Then he signalled to Tiny to lift him down again.

As soon as he was on the ground, he began to crank the handle of the generator. The current flowed up the lead and out along the copper wire.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

There came a mighty chorus of gasps and screams from the men in the trees.

"What ails you?" Nagate shouted.

"It is bewitched. The wire is bewitched," howled the men above.

"What nonsense is this?" roared Nagate, stepping forward to grasp the wire that still lay on the ground.

"How can it burn you. How——Ow, ow, Ow!"

Grimly Kulu cranked a little faster, and stepped up the current. Nagate began to dance wildly as the shock racked him. But he could not let go.

Kulu took the tip of the tusker's trunk and placed it on the handle, while still turning it himself. When Tiny had the feel of the movement, Kulu took his hand away.

The tusker kept on turning.

"Wah, Nagate," called Kulu as he stepped forward out of cover. "I see you do honour to the powerful juju of which I spoke, the white man's juju that lives within the wire."

"Ayee!" screamed Nagate. "Free us, Kulu!"

He hopped and danced as the current ran through his arms. Kulu pretended to think things over.

"Words are easily spoken," Kulu answered. "But they are also easily forgotten. The juju will require deeds. He will need you to take his wire back to the place you took it from, and to set up the wires as they were before. Also must you promise by all your gods never again to touch the juju's."

"These things we will do," Nagate howled. "Only crave his mercy for us now."

Kulu walked out of sight and then returned after a while.

"I have spoken with the juju," he declared. "He has looked into your hearts and found you speak truth. But he warns you that if you break the promises you have given he will leave his wire and seek you out, and punish you in such a way that men will speak of it in hushed voices."

"We would never break our promise" wailed Nagate. "By our gods we swear it."

Kulu was satisfied. He darted to his generator, stopped it, and tugged the lead free from the wire.

Kulu gave the Wambusi no chance to repent their promise, but drove them at once into action. He made them coil the wire and carry it back all the weary miles to the break in the line. Then he set them to felling and trimming two small trees to replace the posts that had been pulled down.

Once the posts were in position the Wambusi had to haul up the wire so that Kulu could connect the breaks.

He connected up his field phone and called headquarters. "Line now alla right," he declared. "Alla normal again."

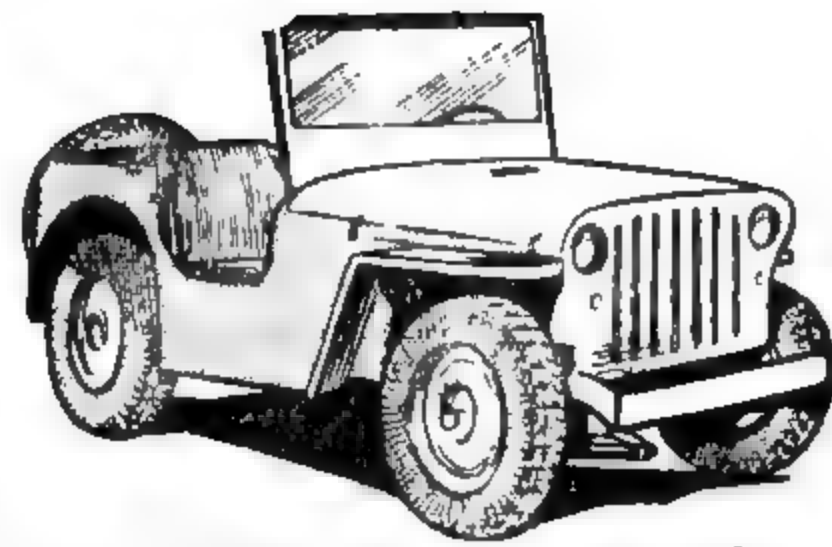
"And about time too," crackled the voice of Marchbanks Bwana. "Why, you lazy, idle, good-for-nothing rascal, it should——"

As the voice ranted on, Kulu smiled. All was indeed normal.

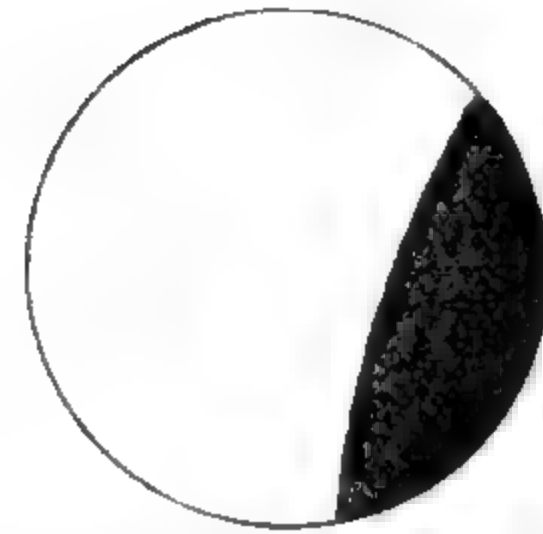
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WORLD-WIDE QUIZ

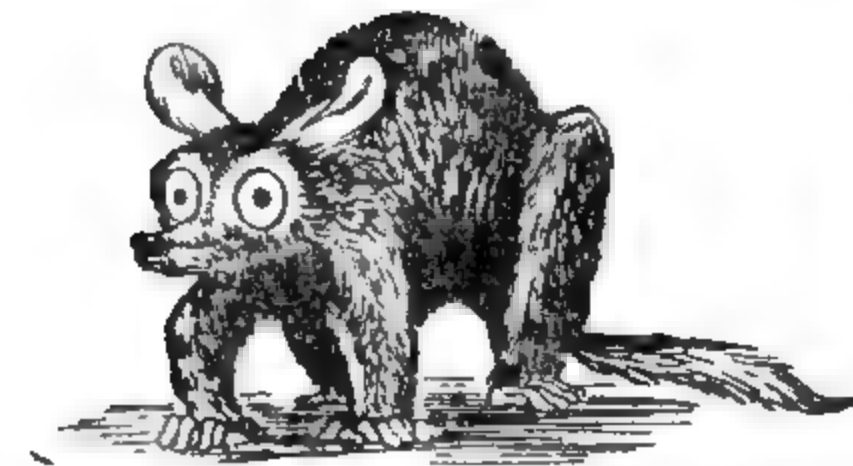
Have a Shot at the Answers—Then Check Them
with the Correct Ones on Page 42



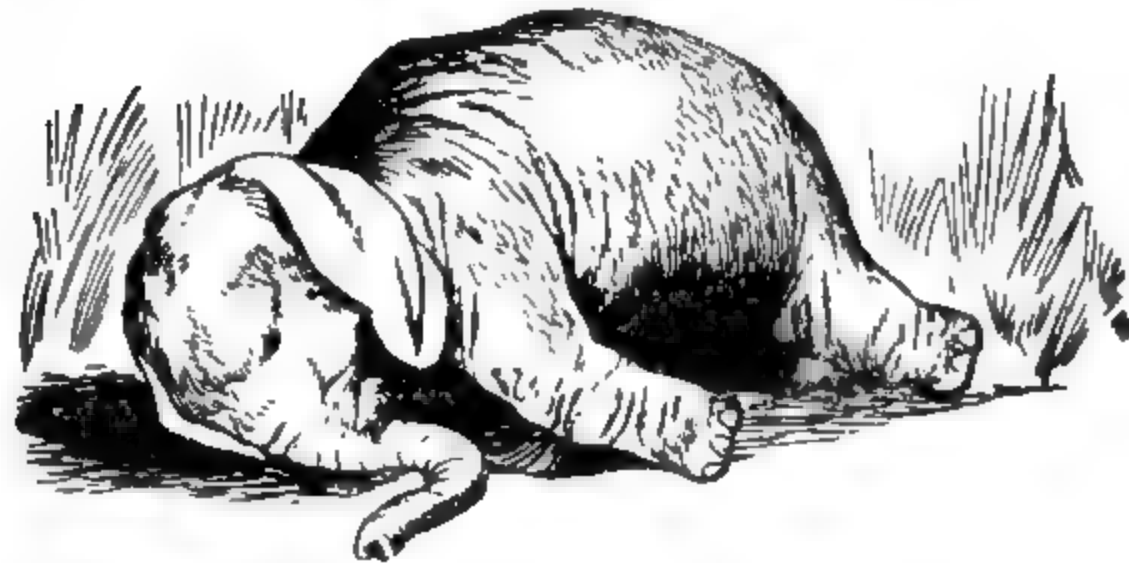
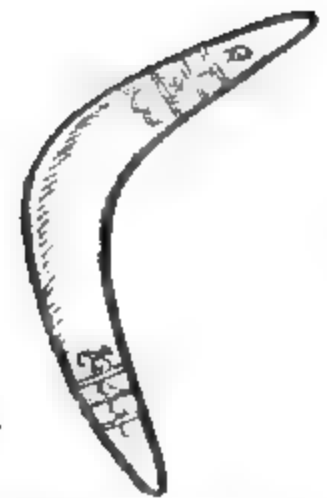
1. IS IT A VEEP, A JEEP, OR A CREEP?



8. IS IT THE FIRST OR LAST QUARTER
OF THE MOON?



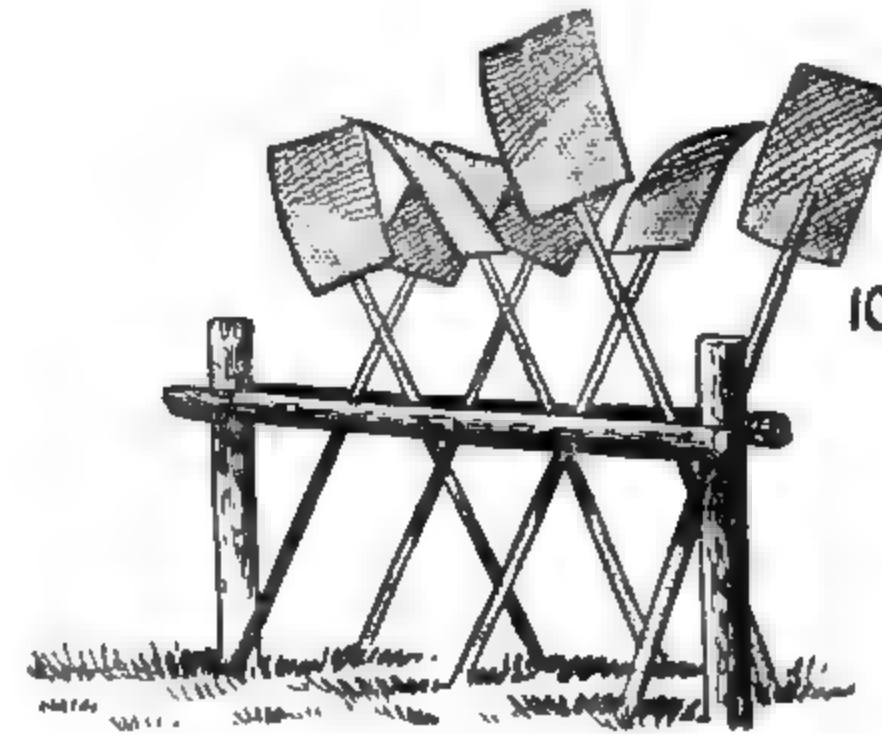
9. WHAT HAVE THEY IN COMMON?



2. DO ELEPHANTS SLEEP IN THIS POSITION?



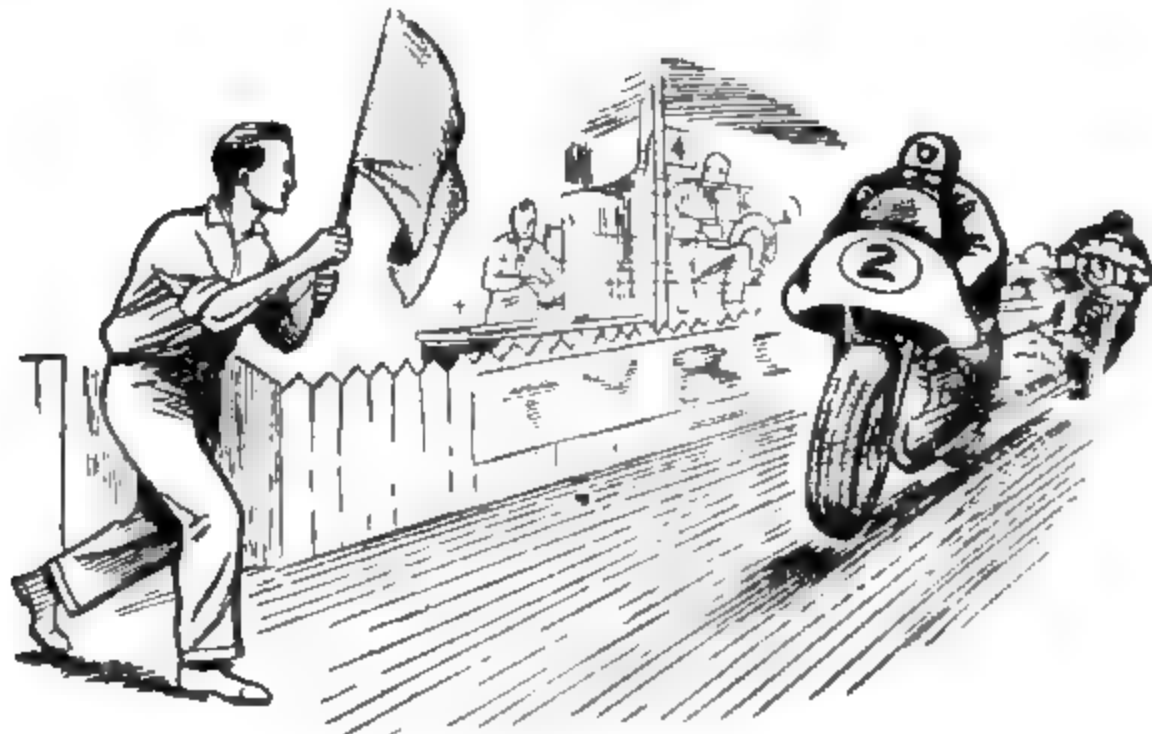
3. WHAT DO THE FEATHERS
REPRESENT?



10. ARE THEY SHOVELS,
TARGETS, OR
BEATERS USED TO
FIGHT FOREST FIRES?

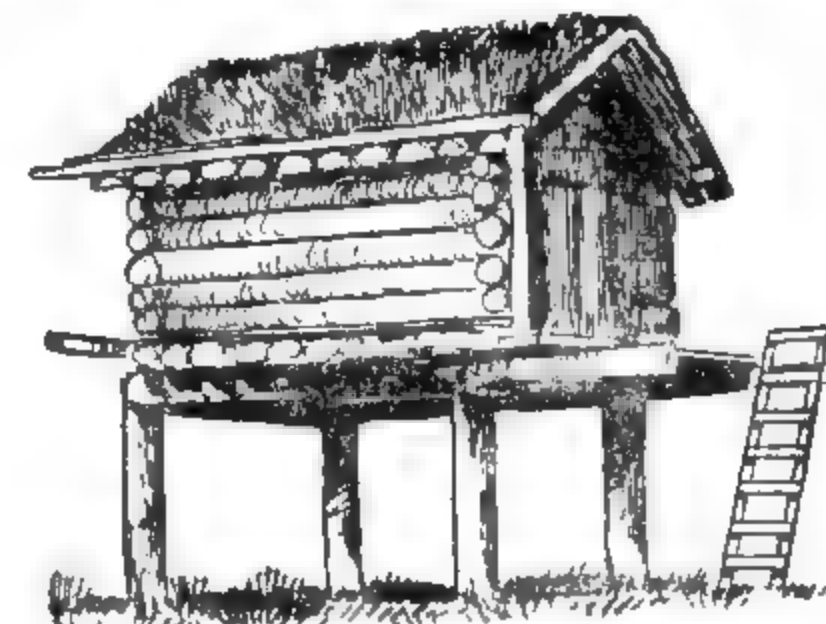
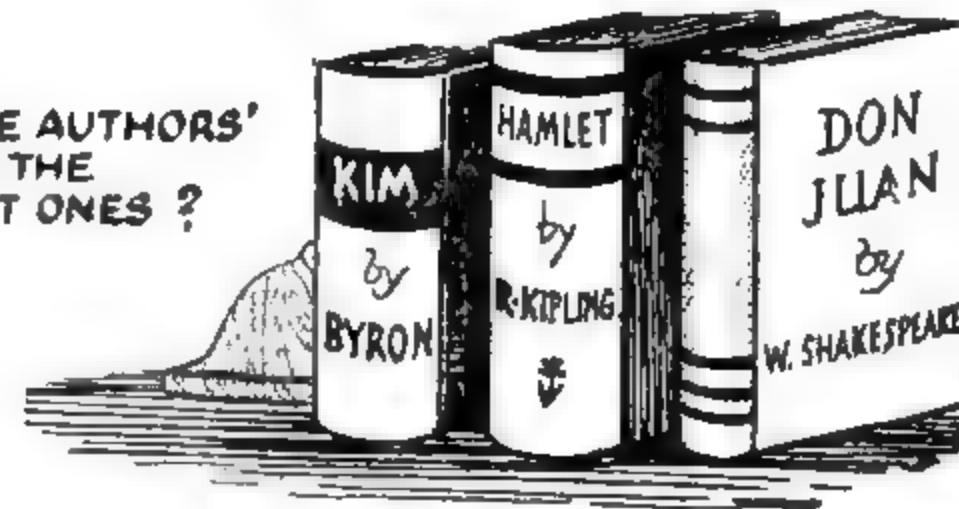


11. THE VICTORY CELEBRATED ON THE ABOVE
DATE IS — WHAT?



4. IF THE FLAG IS RED, IT TELLS THE RACING
MOTOR-CYCLIST — WHAT?

5. ARE THE AUTHORS'
NAMES THE
CORRECT ONES?



12. WHAT IS IT?



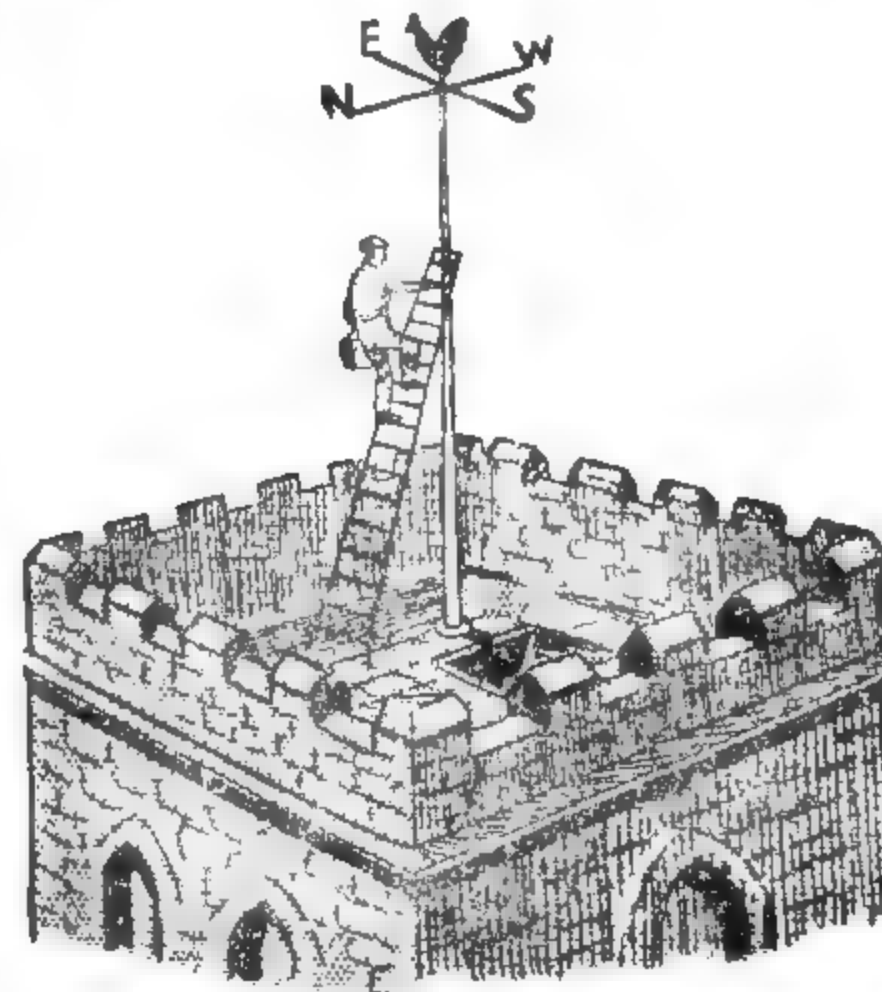
14. IS THE VIEW A CINERAMA, A PANORAMA,
OR AN AROMA?



6. WHAT DOES THE FISHMONGER MEAN?



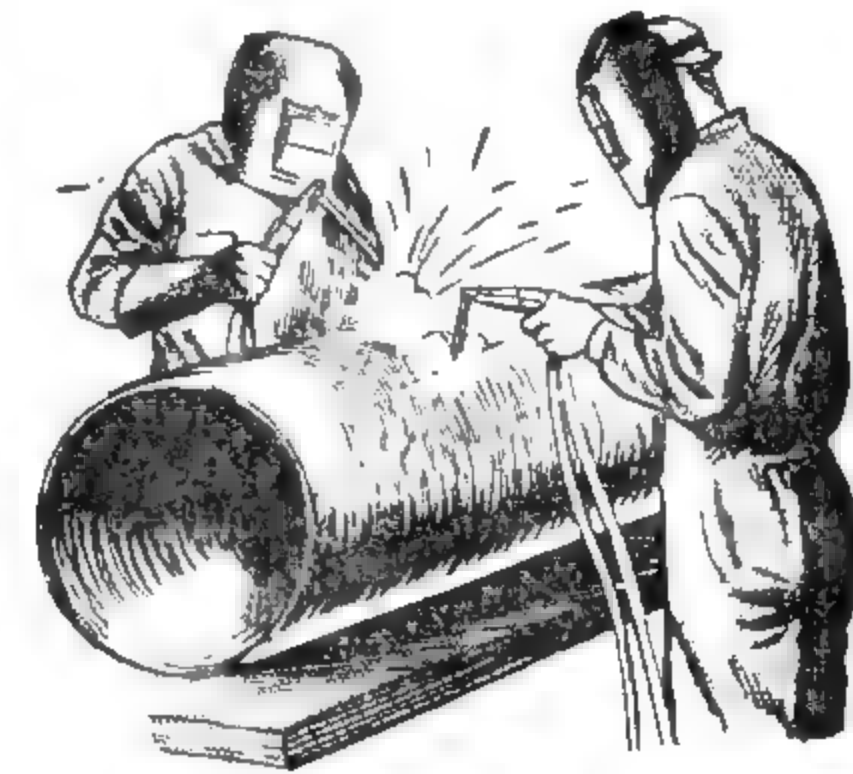
7. GIVE THE TITLE OF THE MAN
IN CHARGE OF THE HOUNDS!



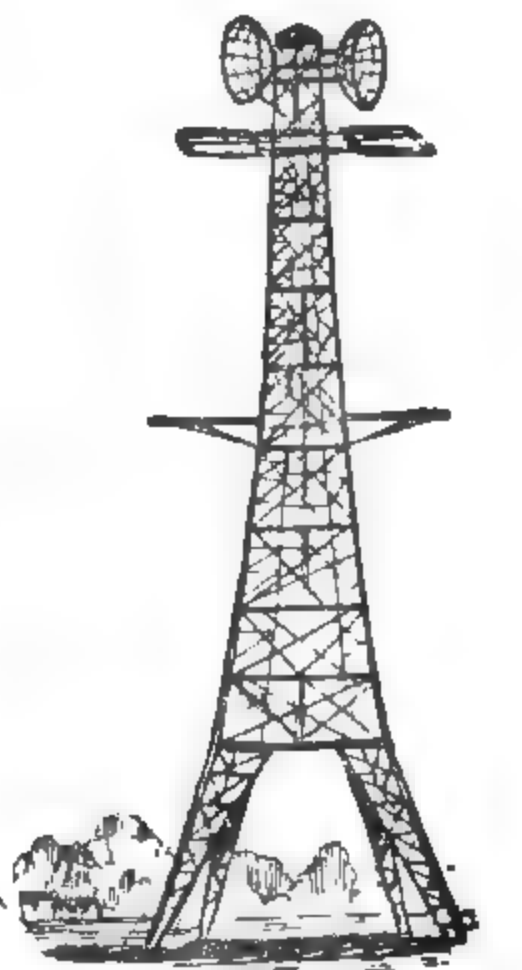
15. HAS THE WORKMAN MADE
A MISTAKE?



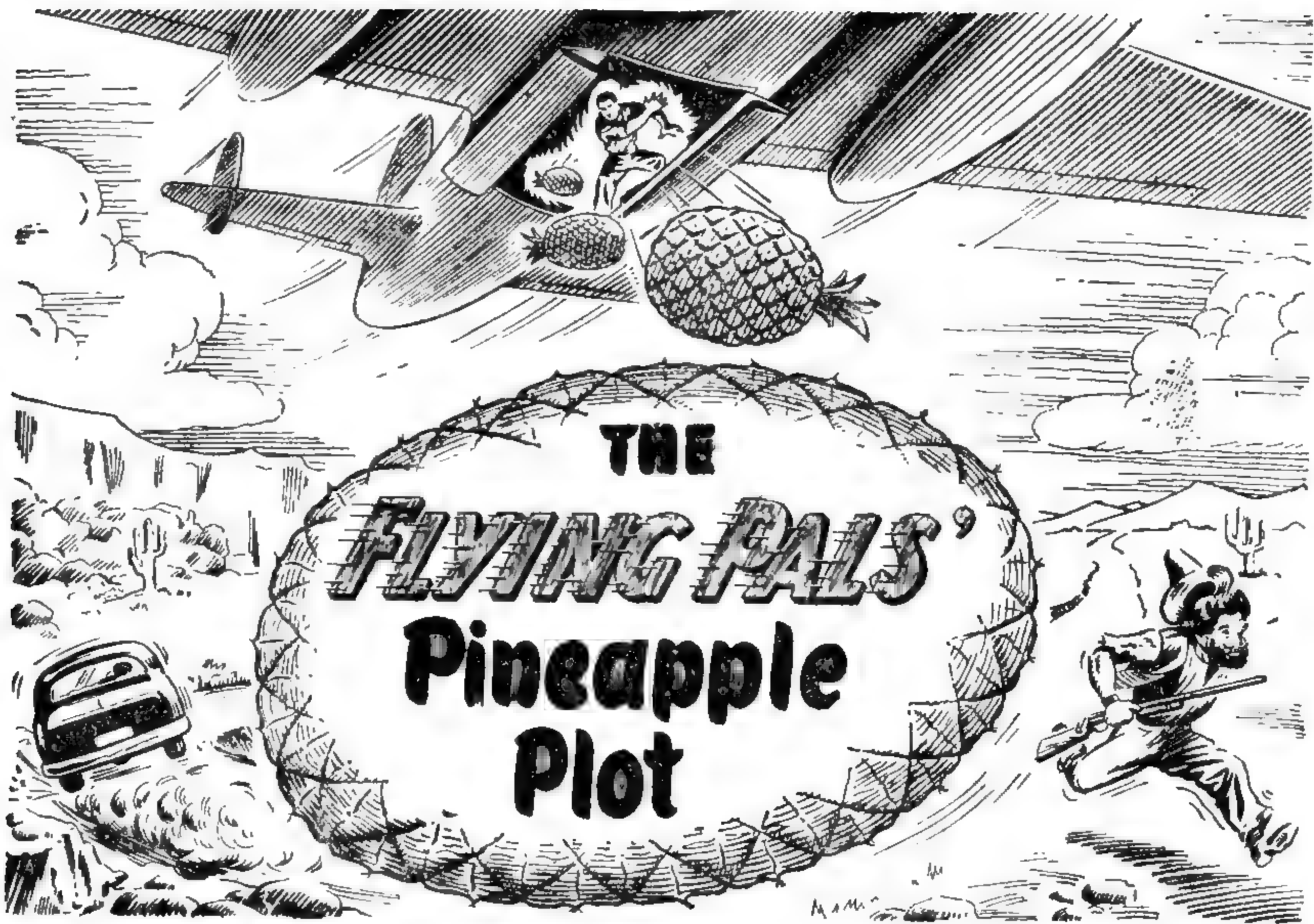
13. ANYTHING WRONG?



16. WHAT KIND OF ENGINEERS
ARE THEY?



17. WHAT IS IT USED
FOR?



DOUBLE-CROSSED

By R. G. Thomas

THE revolution's started, Mark! If we don't get airborne at once we may be held up here for weeks."

Mark Sanger, who had been giving a final check to the engines of the charter plane, Skybird, swung round as Duggie Dodd, his navigator and co-pilot, came racing into the hangar. Even before he could reply the sharp crackle of nearby rifle fire came to him.

"Thank goodness we're all ready to leave, Duggie," he answered. "If we don't escape quickly the Skybird may be seized by either the Government or the rebels, and that would be our finish."

The two young flyers had sunk all their savings in buying Skybird, and had started a charter service in the South American republic of Uraglia. On arriving at the capital town of Casta the day before they had immediately realised that something was very much wrong. Armed guards were posted at every street corner, and time and time again they heard the whispered word "revolution."

They had stayed in Casta overnight, for they were under orders to pick up a load of pineapples. Luckily the pineapple crates had been loaded into the freight compartment early that morning.

Both Mark and Duggie had been in South America long enough to know that anything might happen during a revolution. If the Skybird was damaged in any way the chances were that both of them would be ruined.

"I wouldn't mind seeing something of the revolution," Duggie grinned, as the plane taxied out on to the tarmac. "It might help to take some of the monotony out of flying."

Mark shook his head.

"Bother the revolution," he snorted. "Our job now is to get Skybird out of danger."

At that moment they saw a car speeding along the runway. It was being driven at a reckless speed and there was one anxious moment when both Mark and Duggie thought it was going to crash right into their plane. But there was a sudden squealing of brakes, the car swerved to one side, and two men almost catapulted out of it. There was another outburst of rifle fire, much closer this time.

One of the men shouted to Mark.

"A thousand American dollars if you get us out of Casta!" he yelled.

In a flash Mark and Duggie were out of the plane.

They Use Fruit as "Bombs" to Wreck a Revolution!

Never before had they been offered such a sum for a short flight.

They saw that the second man was lifting two heavy leather cases out of the car.

"You must help us get away!" the first man cried. "The rebels are already after us. I am the Head of the Civil Service and those cases contain important State documents. If they fall into the hands of the rebels all will be lost. The—the thousand dollars will be paid to you the moment we're in the air."

Mark saw running figures appear on the edge of the airfield. The sound of firing was now louder than ever.

"Those cases will have to go in with the pineapples, Duggie," he decided. "Get 'em aboard pronto."

Duggie hurriedly opened the door of the freight compartment and the two cases were lifted up to him. They were so heavy he needed all his strength to hoist them aboard.

It was as he swung up the second case that a rifle cracked nearby. A bullet ploughed along one side of the case.

"All aboard!" Mark cried. "Move—or we're finished."

A great crowd of armed men had swarmed on to the airfield. They made straight for the plane.

The two passengers scrambled aboard. The plane was moving forward before Duggie closed the door of the freight compartment.

Bullets began to whine past the cockpit. Figures running along the runway towards the taxiing aircraft were pumping lead from their rifles.

Setting his teeth grimly, Mark revved the motors and raced Skybird at the attackers. At the last moment Mark pulled the joystick back. The armed men flung themselves flat, just avoiding the spinning undercarriage wheels.

Up into the blue soared Skybird, and Mark breathed his relief. As far as he knew his precious plane had suffered no damage.

But in the freight compartment Duggie Dodd was staring at the second of the big cases. A bullet had slit one side wide open—through the slit wads of bank-notes bulged.

"There's something wrong here," Duggie murmured. "They said these cases were full of State papers. As far as I can see they're chock-full of bank-notes."

Leaving the cases in the centre of the freight compartment, he made his way into the passenger cabin. The two passengers were leaning forward to gaze out of the plane windows at the scene far below them.

Duggie settled himself into the co-pilot's seat alongside Mark. He was just about to tell his pal about the money-stuffed cases when an oily voice spoke behind them.

"Your attention for a few moments, senors, if you please."

Mark and Duggie turned their heads—and goggled. They found themselves gazing into the barrels of two revolvers. Behind the revolvers were two hard and ruthlessly determined faces.

"I'm afraid I deceived you, senors," the man who had spoken went on. "It may interest you to know that I am Pedro Pasquali."

The eyes of Mark and Duggie opened wider than ever. They had heard the name the moment they had arrived in Casta. They knew it to be that of the rebel leader. He was a man who had been stirring up trouble for months.

"Two things have happened in Casta this morning," Pasquali went on smoothly. "The President, Juan Melado, was captured by some of my men. He is now being taken to our secret stronghold in the desert. This morning, too, a quick attack was made upon the National Bank, and the two cases in this plane contain nearly the whole of the country's wealth. Apart from the money they contain government bonds and deeds worth millions of dollars. With the President and the country's wealth in my hands, the revolution cannot help but succeed."

Mark looked at him coldly.

"Why are you telling me all this?" he asked the swarthy South American.

The rebel leader shrugged.

"Because you will now change course and take me to my secret rendezvous in the desert. Also, from this moment your plane is my property."

"That's what you think," Mark rapped angrily. "Your guns don't frighten me. I'm flying this plane, and we're heading back to Casta. When we arrive there the government authorities will have to decide what to do with you."

The other's face became colder still.

"You are being very foolish, senor. Unless you obey orders I shall shoot you both. It so happens that my companion is a qualified pilot; I think it better that he takes over the controls here and now."

Mark flashed Duggie a quick look. He realised that the rebel leader meant every word. Mark's first impulse had been to throw the plane into a roll and then try to disarm the two men when they were off-balance. But with two guns only a few inches away, such an attempt might be nothing less than sheer suicide.

Already the plane was well over the desert. Far below Mark could just make out the few stunted trees that fringed a small oasis.

"You will now leave the controls, senor," Pasquali snapped, "and you will place your hands upon your head. You and your companion will seat yourselves in the two seats directly behind me. Now!"

Again Mark looked at Duggie and he saw that at

a word from him Duggie was ready to go into action. But Mark was boiling with rage. He had no intention at all of losing Skybird. He was almost sure too that when they did land the rebels would not hesitate to shoot them both.

That was when Mark hit on an idea. Even as he lifted his hands from the controls his foot moved—to press down a small lever.

There was a shock in store for the smug rebel leader!

WHEN REBEL LOOT VANISHED

“ALL right! You’ve got the drop on us.”

Mark gave a slight shrug as he spoke. Then, getting to his feet, he placed his hands on his head and walked slowly to a passenger seat. The rebel leader’s companion instantly slid into the pilot’s seat.

“And now, senors,” Pedro Pasquali rasped, “you will sit perfectly still. One false move and I shoot to kill.”

The plane flew steadily on.

Suddenly an exclamation escaped the pilot.

“President Melado has already completed half his journey in the hands of our men. Look below!”

Peering out of a plane window, Mark saw a narrow, winding desert track far beneath. Along it half a dozen black cars were moving, followed by a heavy dust cloud. The President of Uraglia was a prisoner in one of the cars!

Mark’s face hardened. President Melado had ruled Uraglia wisely and justly for many years. It was entirely thanks to him that prosperity had come to the tiny country. And now his place was going to be taken by a man who was nothing but a cold-blooded crook.

“Not if I can help it,” Mark vowed.

The plane still sped on and then it began to circle for a landing. As it banked over Mark saw what appeared to be a desert fort below him. Beyond it was a scattered group of adobe huts.

Skybird was set down in front of the fort. Instantly a crowd of men surged about it. A few of them were dressed in ragged uniforms but the majority wore the dress of peons.

The moment the plane had come to a stop the pilot menaced Mark and Duggie with his gun.

To the sound of wild shouting, rebel leader Pedro Pasquali alighted. Mark and Duggie were told to follow after him. They climbed out of the plane with their hands in the air.

Pedro Pasquali looked at them and shrugged.

“I’m sorry, senors,” he said, “but you have now fulfilled your purpose. It will save trouble for me in the future if I now dispose of you without loss of time.”

It was exactly as Mark had feared. They were to be bumped off.

But to Duggie’s great surprise Mark chuckled.

“Before you do anything rash, Pasquali,” he grinned, “I suggest you look inside the freight compartment of the plane.”

The rebel leader looked towards the plane. For the first time he saw that a wide flap was swinging loose beneath it. With a startled cry he ran forward, and his head and shoulders disappeared through the opening underneath the plane.

When he emerged his face was frantic.

“My two cases have vanished! They are not inside the plane!”

Mark laughed outright.

“Too true, Pasquali. When you ordered me out of the pilot’s seat I pressed a lever which opened that hatch underneath the plane. I knew that both your cases were standing upon it. They’re lying now somewhere far out in the desert, and I’m the only man who knows exactly where they fell. If you want them back I think you’d better let me live a little longer.”

There was an anxious moment when he thought that the furious rebel leader was going to shoot him down right there and then.

“So, senor,” Pasquali gritted, “you think you buy your life by playing such a trick. But I am not beaten so easily! When my companion took over control of the plane from you we were not far from the oasis. Therefore the cases must be lying nearby.”

The rebel leader paused to ponder.

“The cases will come to no harm in the desert. I have men to spare in order to search for them. The plane must remain here, for after the President Melado arrives I shall use it to return to Casta. There I shall spur my rebels to overthrow the government.”

He began to give quick orders. Within a few minutes three lorries drove out of the fort. Nearly all the peons present were abroad, and the man who had piloted Skybird sat alongside the driver of the first lorry.

It was certain that such a crowd would have no difficulty in finding the two cases dropped from the plane.

As the lorries drove off, Mark tensed himself for action. He had hoped to make a bargain with Pasquali—to barter his life against the recovery of the cases.

Again the rebel leader addressed the two pals.

“For the moment, senors, I will let you live. It may be that my men will fail to find the cases. Should that happen, then you will fly me back to where they were dropped. So for the moment you will be my most unwelcome guests.”

He rapped out a command and two heavily-armed peons closed in on Mark and Duggie. They indicated the wide entrance of the fort and then prodded the pals with their rifles. It was obvious that the two captives were being led away to a cell.

Mark knew that unless they acted within the next few minutes, Duggie and he would certainly lose all chance of turning the tables on the ruthless rebel leader!

INTO THE ATTACK—WITH PINEAPPLES

WE'VE got to sock the guards, Duggie. You follow suit the moment I go into action."

Mark whispered the words out of the corner of his mouth as they passed through the fort gateway. To his great relief he saw that the place appeared to be deserted—almost the entire rebel garrison had set off on the hunt for the money-packed cases.

He saw, too, that the rascally Pedro Pasquali was following after them. Just before they were hustled into the main building he saw the rebel leader enter a small adobe hut just inside the gates.

The two pals were urged along a narrow passage. Then one of the peons stepped forward to throw open the iron gate of a small cell.

Mark knew that his one and only chance of escape had come.

Having swung the iron gate open, the peon stepped back in order to allow Mark to pass into the cell. Mark took a step forward and in doing so his fist came swinging up right from his knee. Every ounce

of strength was in the blow that landed flush on the peon's jaw.

Even as the man teetered on his feet, Mark heard another satisfying thud from behind him. He spun round just as the other peon crashed against the wall. Duggie had K.O.'d his guard.

"Good work, Duggie!" Mark cried. "Quickly, now! Into the cell with them!"

Dragged into the cell, the two peons were gagged and bound with strips torn from their clothes.

"We want their sombreros and their blankets now," Mark stated quickly. "And their weapons, too."

Both peons were armed with rifles and revolvers.

It had all taken place in the matter of a minute or so. It appeared to be two peons who walked out of the cell. But actually it was Mark and Duggie. Shoulder to shoulder, they walked back to the open.

Both Mark and Duggie were more than tense now. The wide sombreros effectively shielded their faces, and the ragged blankets about their shoulders served as a fairly good disguise. But would they be able to get to the plane without being challenged?

"Gosh, Mark!" Duggie breathed. "When I asked for a spot of excitement I didn't think we were going to find it so quickly."

"And the real excitement hasn't started yet," Mark said grimly. "We're taking that crook, Pasquali, with us. If we manage to get away with him I've an idea his Revolution will fizzle out straight away."

Duggie faltered a little in his stride.

"Jeepers, Mark!" he gasped. "We'll never get away with Pasquali."

"We're going to have a darn good try," was the reply.

Their eyes were constantly on the alert as they crossed the courtyard in front of the fort. At any moment they expected to hear a shout of alarm from behind them. But nothing happened, and it was



Smirking triumphantly, the ruthless rebel-leader kept Mark and Duggie covered with his gun. He thought he'd tricked the flying pals into helping him escape with stolen bank-notes—but there was a shattering shock coming his way.

Mark who calmly walked through the doorway of the adobe hut just inside the gates.

Pedro Pasquali was inside. He was seated at a rough table which was littered with a mass of papers. And he was so engrossed in them that he did not even lift his head as the two pals entered.

His first inkling of danger was the pressure of a revolver in the middle of his back.

"One squeak out of you, Pasquali," Mark said grimly, "and I'll bump you off just as you intended to bump us off."

The eyes of the rebel leader stood out of his head and his whole body seemed to freeze. He was too dumbfounded to speak.

"You're going to get to your feet," Mark went on, "and you're going to walk between us to the plane. Duggie and I are now heavily armed and at the least alarm we'll use our guns—on you."

And so Pasquali left the hut, walking between Mark and Duggie. A few peons were dozing in the shade outside the wall, but they never even lifted their heads. Reaching the plane, Mark climbed in first. Duggie forced Pasquali to follow after him.

The moment the rebel leader entered, Mark thrust him into a seat and bound him securely to it.

It was only as Skybird's engines roared into life that the alarm was raised. Two excited, gesticulating peons came bursting out of the fort gateway. Their outburst brought the lounging figures underneath the wall leaping to their feet. In a mass they started racing for the plane.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The rabble of peons pulled up as though they had run into an invisible wall. For Duggie was kneeling in the plane doorway with a rifle to his shoulder. And then just as the plane began to taxi forward, the peons turned and raced for cover.

"That's that," Duggie chuckled as he slid the plane door shut.

Mark grinned at him over his shoulder.

"And now," he said, "we'll pick up the two cases of Government treasure."

Within a matter of a few minutes they were passing high over the three lorries that had left the fort. On and on they flew, and then Mark was circling low above the small oasis. He came down until he was almost in danger of making a crash landing.

"There's one of the cases!" Duggie suddenly shouted.

Skybird made a perfect landing on the soft sand. And the plane pulled up within a few yards of the first case. It had burst open on hitting the ground and its contents were scattered. Wads of notes and heavy documents were gathered up by the armful and flung into the plane.

Fifty yards away they found the other burst-open

case. Again armfuls of notes and documents were carried into the plane.

When Skybird took to the air again, Pedro Pasquali was half hidden by the wealth of Uraglia.

"And now," Mark said quietly, "to rescue the President."

Duggie almost gaped at him.

"You're crazy, Mark!" he gasped. "How can we possibly rescue the President Melano! That convoy of cars taking him across desert must be bristling with weapons. They'll shoot us out of the sky."

Mark chuckled.

"I've an idea it's going to be easy," he said. "I'll explain my plan of action."

And when Mark finished talking, Duggie also was chuckling.

"Gosh, Mark," he said, "this is going to give us the best laugh yet!"

Mark guided the plane along the narrow, winding desert track. The line of cars was almost in sight of the desert fort when Skybird swooped down. Racing ahead, the plane came round in a sharp circle and then zoomed low—straight at the convoy.

Duggie Dodd was lying full length inside the luggage compartment, with the floor hatchway now flapping open.

As he roared towards the cars Mark saw rebels pointing up at the plane.

"Now, Duggie!" Mark yelled with all the force of his lungs.

Next moment there was chaos on the narrow desert trail. Cars skidded or pulled up in clouds of dust. Even before the cars had come to a stop the occupants were leaping out of them and running for cover.

For the scared occupants had seen two small bomb-like objects leave the plane!

Over the scattered cars Skybird roared, to rise again and then bank round in another sharp turn. Mark saw then that one of the cars was heading back the way it had come.

"Let 'em have another two, Duggie," he yelled.

And as the plane roared back over the scattered cars, Duggie dropped another huge pineapple through the hatch opening.

The rebels were being "bombed" with fruit!

"They're still in hiding," Duggie chuckled. "They won't take any risks, even though the first two 'bombs' failed to explode."

The plane banked again and then Mark suddenly saw a figure below him. The man was holding something in his hand and he was obviously shouting.

"He's picked up one of the pineapples," Mark chuckled. "He's learned that we weren't bombing them after all."

And then the plane was roaring after the lone car that was racing back along the trail.

"It's practically certain that President Medalo is driving it," Mark told himself. "He didn't lose a moment in taking the chance to make a getaway."

Mark flew the plane low over the car, then landed ahead of it. The car came on, pulled up, and out stepped smiling President Melado!

"I do not know who you are," he said, "or how you were able to come to my rescue. But I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"We'll explain everything when we're back up in the air," Mark told him. "Let's get going."

And so President Melado and the wealth of Uraglia were returned to Casta. By nightfall the Revolution had petered out and the majority of Pasquali's supporters were in prison.

A few days later Mark and Duggie attended a dinner held in their honour. After a magnificent meal, President Melano rose to his feet and raised his glass to the two pals.

"But for you, my friends, I would not longer be President, and the country would be in the hands of the villainous Pedro Pasquali. Once again I thank you both. And now, will you please follow me. I have a surprise for you."

Mystified but highly excited, Mark and Duggie followed the President from the room and out on to a balcony.

Beaming, the President pointed down into the expansive grounds of his home.

"There is my surprise, my friends. It is for you—as token of my gratitude."



With sizzling uppercuts Mark and Duggie k.o.'d the rebel guards. Now the flying pals were free to put into operation their amazing scheme for wrecking the revolution.

Mark and Duggie rushed to the balcony-edge, peered over, and—

"Jumping joysticks—it's a plane. A brand-new cargo plane!" whooped Duggie.

"And it's ours, pal—ours!" cried Mark, slapping his pal heartily on the back. "Gee whiz, it'll enable us to double our business."

The smiling President put his hands on the pal's shoulders.

"That is just what I planned—because from this day I have arranged that you shall carry all government air-mail and documents."

Mark was overjoyed.

"Hear that, Duggie? What terrific news. Gosh, smashing a revolution is sure good for business. Now let's go aboard that plane. I'm itching to get my hands on the controls."

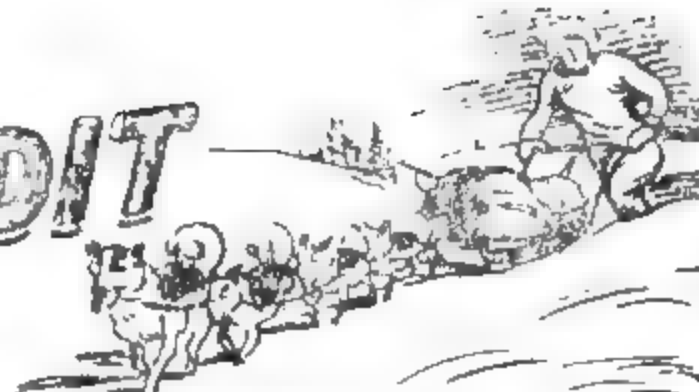
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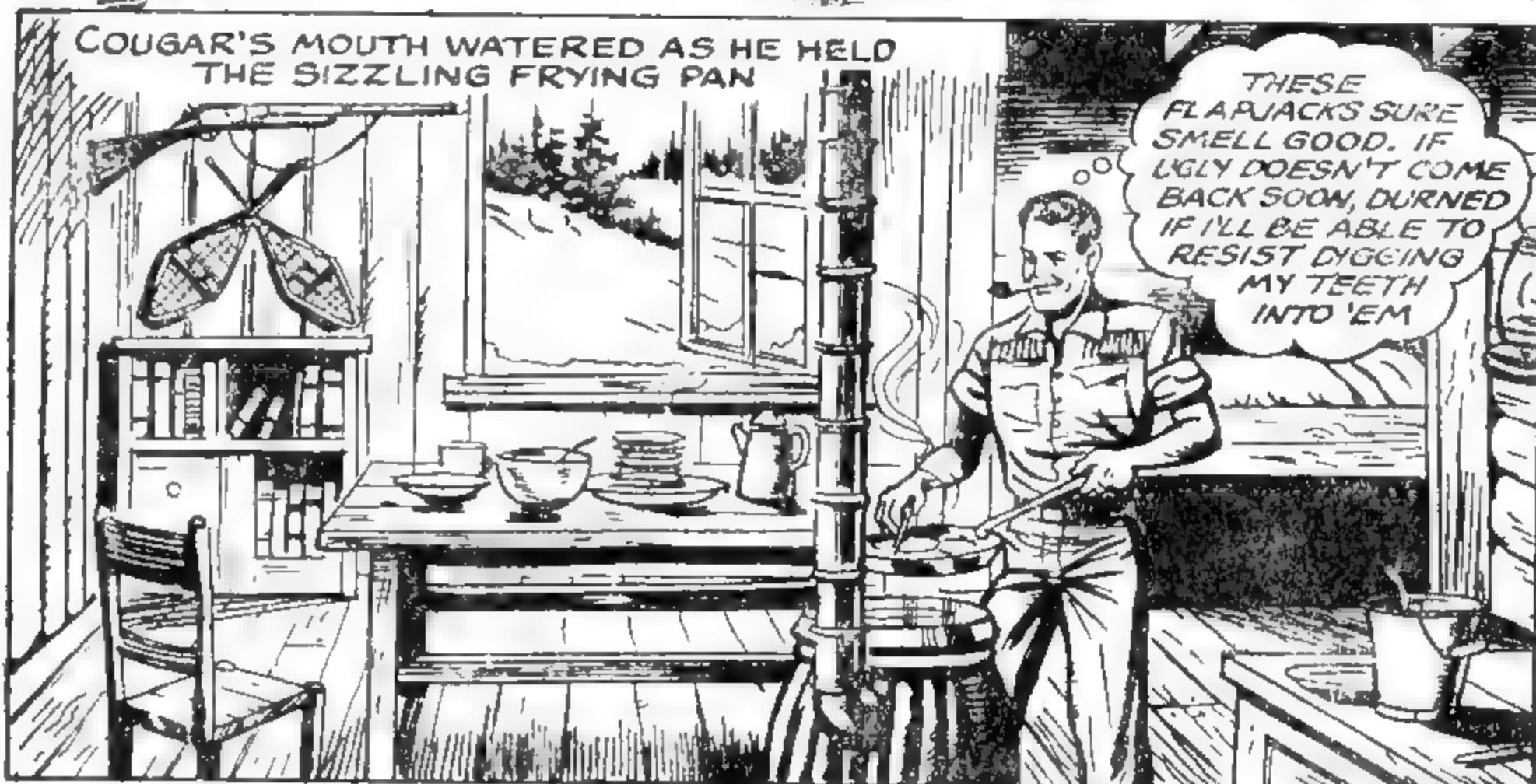
COUGAR CORRIGAN PROVES HIMSELF —

TOO TOUGH FOR THE BACKWOODS BANDIT

BY
RAY MARR



IN HIS CABIN IN THE FROZEN NORTH OF CANADA, TRAPPER COUGAR CORRIGAN WAS PREPARING A MEAL FOR HIMSELF AND HIS YOUNG ESKIMO PAL, ULIGAK. THE ESKIMO HAD GONE WITH SUPPLIES TO THE SHACK OF "HARD-LUCK" HENNESSY. HENNESSY HAD BROKEN HIS LEG JUST AFTER FINDING A NUGGET OF GOLD WORTH AT LEAST 1,000 DOLLARS



A CRASHING SOUND FROM THE OPEN WINDOW MADE COUGAR WHEEL

HEY—WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHY—IT'S RAJAH, MY LEAD DOG! HE SHOULD BE WITH UGLY. WHAT'S GONE WRONG?



GEE! THERE'S A NOTE IN HIS COLLAR!



THE NOTE WAS FROM ULIGAK, AND IT RAN AS FOLLOWS —

Jack - Knife Dawson him steal Hennessy's big gold nugget Dawson making for schooner at Dippers Bar I go follow Ugly.

FACE HARD WITH ANGER, COUGAR PULLED ON HIS PARKA AND OUTDOOR FURS

SO THAT THIEVING SKUNK DAWSON IS UP TO HIS TRICKS AGAIN. BUT HE AIN'T GONNA GET AWAY WITH THIS. C'MON, RAJAH, WE'RE HITTING THE TRAIL



TO REACH THE SCHOONER, DAWSON'LL HAVE TO PASS WOLF FANG FORK. I'LL TRY TO HEAD HIM OFF THERE



AS COUGAR REACHED A RIDGE ABOVE WOLF FANG FORK HE SPOTTED TRACKS IN THE SNOW



TWO SETS--AND THE SMALL ONES ARE UGLY'S. HE'S MIGHTY CLOSE ON DAWSON'S HEELS--P'RAPS TOO CLOSE. GUESS I'VE GOTTA MOVE FAST

COUGAR FOLLOWED THE TRACKS ALONG THE RIDGE UNTIL HE CAME TO A CLUMP OF BUSHES. THEN HE STOPPED DEAD AT THE SCENE THAT MET HIS GAZE

THAT FIXES YOU, AN' IF THE WOLVES GET YOU, IT WON'T WORRY ME NONE

BY HECK! DAWSON HAS FELLED UGLY--AND NOW HE'S TYING HIM UP!



HIS EYES GLINTING ANGRILY, COUGAR STOLE FORWARD AND LEVELLED HIS RIFLE



THE GAME'S UP, DAWSON. UNTIE THAT BOY

COUGAR CORRIGAN! WHERE IN THUNDER DID YUH COME FROM? DON'T SHOOT. I GUESS YOU WIN

BUT THOUGH THE CROOK BEGAN TO UNTIE ULIGAK'S BONDS, A PLAN WAS HATCHING IN HIS RASCALLY BRAIN. SUDDENLY HE SNATCHED UP THE ESKIMO LAD, AND HELD HIM AS A SHIELD



OKAY--NOW GO ON AND SHOOT, CORRIGAN--IF YOU DARE

NOT WORRY ABOUT ME, COUGAR. YOU SHOOT

COUGAR WAS A CRACK-SHOT, BUT HE DARED NOT RISK HITTING HIS PAL. HE LOWERED HIS RIFLE



ALL RIGHT, DAWSON. I WON'T SHOOT. BUT I'M GONNA GET YOU JUST THE SAME

YOU THINK SO, HUH? JUST WATCH ME

TOO LATE COUGAR SAW THE CROOK'S PLAN. DAWSON SWUNG ROUND, AND, WITH A MIGHTY PUSH, SENT ULIGAK HURTLING DOWN THE SLOPE



THAT'S FIXED CORRIGAN. HE'S BOUND TO GO AFTER HIS PAL, AND THEY'LL BOTH FINISH UP IN THE RIVER

THE TURNED TRICKSTER! HE KNOWS I WON'T DESERT ULIGAK

THUNDER! IF UGLY GOES INTO THE RIVER, HE'LL BE DROWNED. I'VE GOTTA STOP HIM SOMEHOW-- BUT HOW?



A DARING IDEA CAME TO COUGAR AS HE SAW A FLAT ROCK AT THE EDGE OF THE SLOPE. DESPERATELY HE RACED FOR IT

THERE'S JUST ONE CHANCE! IF I CAN GET THAT ROCK MOVING, IT'LL HURTLE DOWN THE SLOPE FASTER THAN UGLY-



WITH A TERRIFIC HEAVE COUGAR FORCED THE ROCK OVER THE EDGE AND SPRANG ON TO IT

MADE IT! NOW I'M REALLY MOVING!



DAWSON'S FACE TWISTED INTO AN EVIL GRIN AS HE WATCHED COUGAR'S ATTEMPT TO SAVE HIS PAL

HE'S CRAZY. THIS MEANS CURTAINS FOR BOTH OF 'EM-- AN' A CLEAN GETAWAY FOR ME



FASTER AND FASTER COUGAR HURTLED DOWN THE SLOPE ON HIS MAKE-SHIFT SLEDGE



THE YOUNG ESKIMO WAS FILLED WITH DESPAIR AS HE WAS CARRIED TOWARDS THE DARK, ICY WATER

ULIGAK DONE FOR! NO CAN HOPE



THEN THE SPEEDING ROCK OVERTOOK ULIGAK, AND COUGAR HURLED HIMSELF THROUGH THE AIR



OUT SHOT COUGAR'S HANDS-- TO GRIP HIS PAL'S ANKLES IN THE NICK OF TIME



HIGH ON THE RIDGE ABOVE, DAWSON'S FACE WAS DARK WITH FURY



MEANWHILE, COUGAR HAD HAULED ULIGAK ON TO LEVEL ICE AND WAS CUTTING HIS BONDS



ALL AT ONCE RAJAH SPRANG FOR COUGAR AND SENT HIM STAGGERING



A MOMENT LATER, BOTH PALS KNEW THE REASON FOR THE DOG'S ACTION



LIKE LIGHTNING THE PALS HURLED THEMSELVES TO ONE SIDE, AND, MISSING THEM BY INCHES, THE BOULDER CRASHED THROUGH THE ICE



BEFORE THEY COULD ACT, HOWEVER, THE PALS WERE MENACED BY ANOTHER PERIL!

GOSH! THE BOULDER'S BROKEN THE ICE AWAY. WE'RE ADRIPT ON A FLOE



DAWSON SAW WHAT HAD HAPPENED—AND LAUGHED EVILLY

GUESS THAT FIXES YOU, COUGAR CORRIGAN. THAT FLOE'LL CARRY YOU ALONG TO THE OPEN SEA, AND THE TWO OF YUH'LL FREEZE TO DEATH. BY THAT TIME I'LL BE ON THE SCHOONER—WITH THE 1,000-DOLLAR NUGGET!



ADRIPT ON THE FLOE, ULIGAK DECIDED TO TAKE A CHANCE

ME DIVE INTO WATER AND SWIM TO RIVER BANK



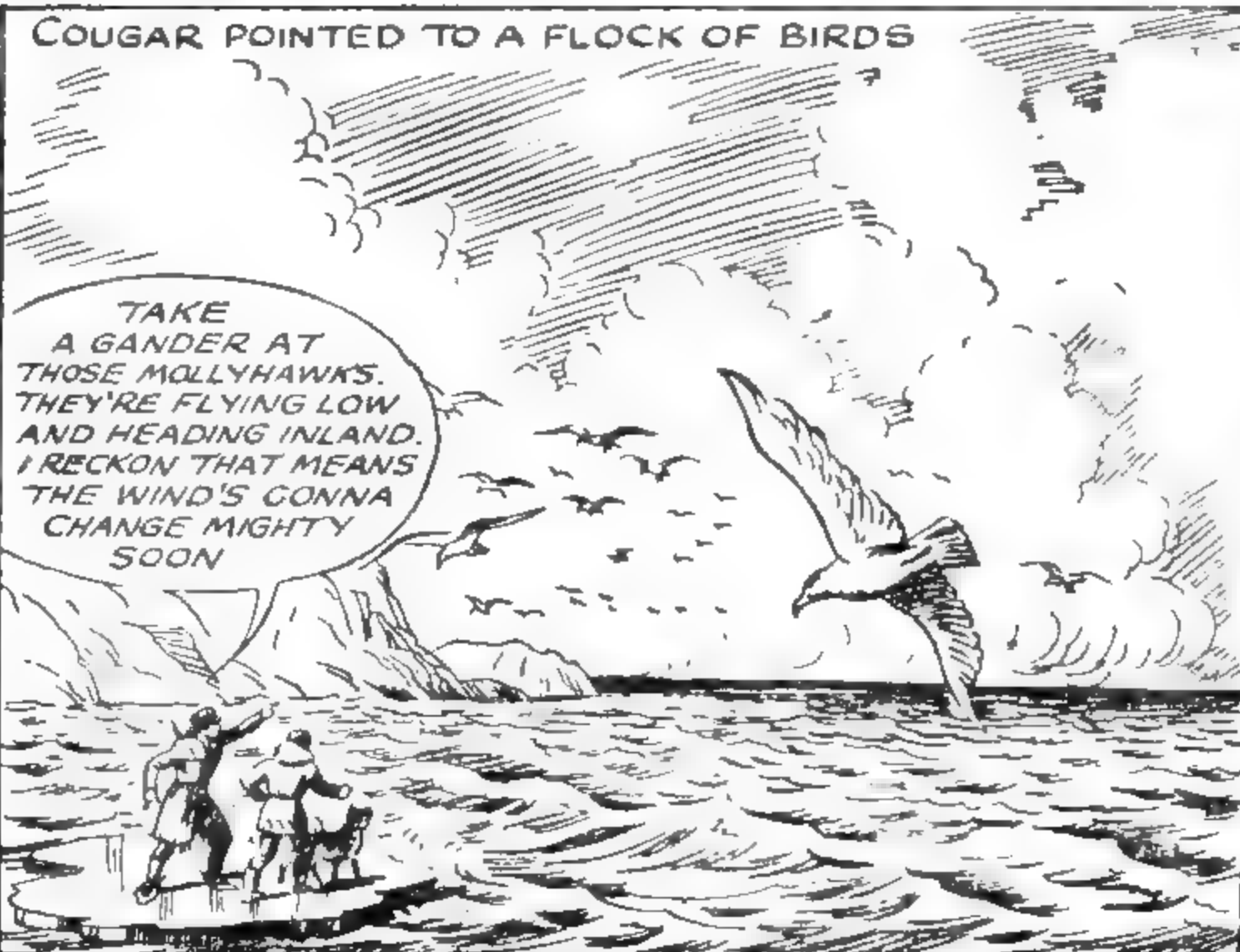
IN A FLASH COUGAR GRABBED HIS YOUNG PAL

HOLD YOUR HORSES, UGLY. YOU WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE IN THAT CURRENT. MAYBE THERE'S A BETTER WAY



COUGAR POINTED TO A FLOCK OF BIRDS

TAKE A GANDER AT THOSE MOLLYHAWKS. THEY'RE FLYING LOW AND HEADING INLAND. I RECKON THAT MEANS THE WIND'S GONNA CHANGE MIGHTY SOON



THEN, TO ULIGAK'S AMAZEMENT, COUGAR BEGAN TO PULL OFF HIS PARKA

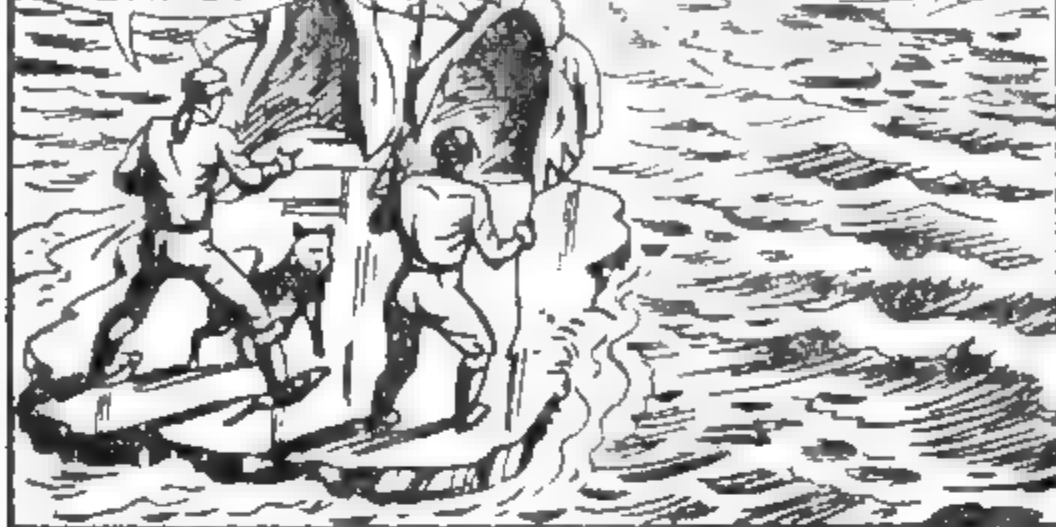
COME ON, UGLY. OFF WITH YOURS, TOO. WE CAN USE THAT WIND



SWIFTLY COUGAR RIGGED THE PARKAS ON HIS RIFLE TO ACT AS A SAIL AND DRIVE THE ICE-FLOE ALONG THE COAST

THIS HEAP BETTER THAN SWIMMING

SURE IS, UGLY. AND DIPPER'S BAR, WHERE THE SCHOONER IS, LIES JUST OVER THAT RIDGE. WE'RE HEADING FOR A SHOW-DOWN WITH DAWSON



IT WAS SOME TIME LATER THAT THE SCHOONER BEGAN TO PULL OUT FROM THE JETTY AT DIPPER'S BAR, AND DAWSON WAS ON BOARD!

NUTHIN' CAN NOW STOP ME GETTING CLEAN AWAY WITH HARD-LUCK HENNESSY'S 1,000-BUCK NUGGET



BUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT, NOT FAR AWAY, COUGAR AND ULIGAK WERE SPRINGING ASHORE FROM THE ICE-FLOE!

WE'VE GOTTA MOVE FAST, UGLY. I SPOTTED THE SCHOONER'S MASTS ABOVE THE SHACKS



FRANTICALLY THE PALS HURRIED UP THE SLOPE, BUT--

NO GOOD, COUGAR, WE TOO LATE. LOOK! SCHOONER MOVE QUICK

TARNATION! IS THAT SKUNK DAWSON GONNA SLIP ME AFTER ALL?



COUGAR SPURTED TO THE TOP OF THE RIDGE - TO SEE THE SCHOONER HEADING OUT TO SEA

GUESS DAWSON THINKS HE'S BEATEN ME, BUT HE'S GOT ANOTHER THINK COMING!



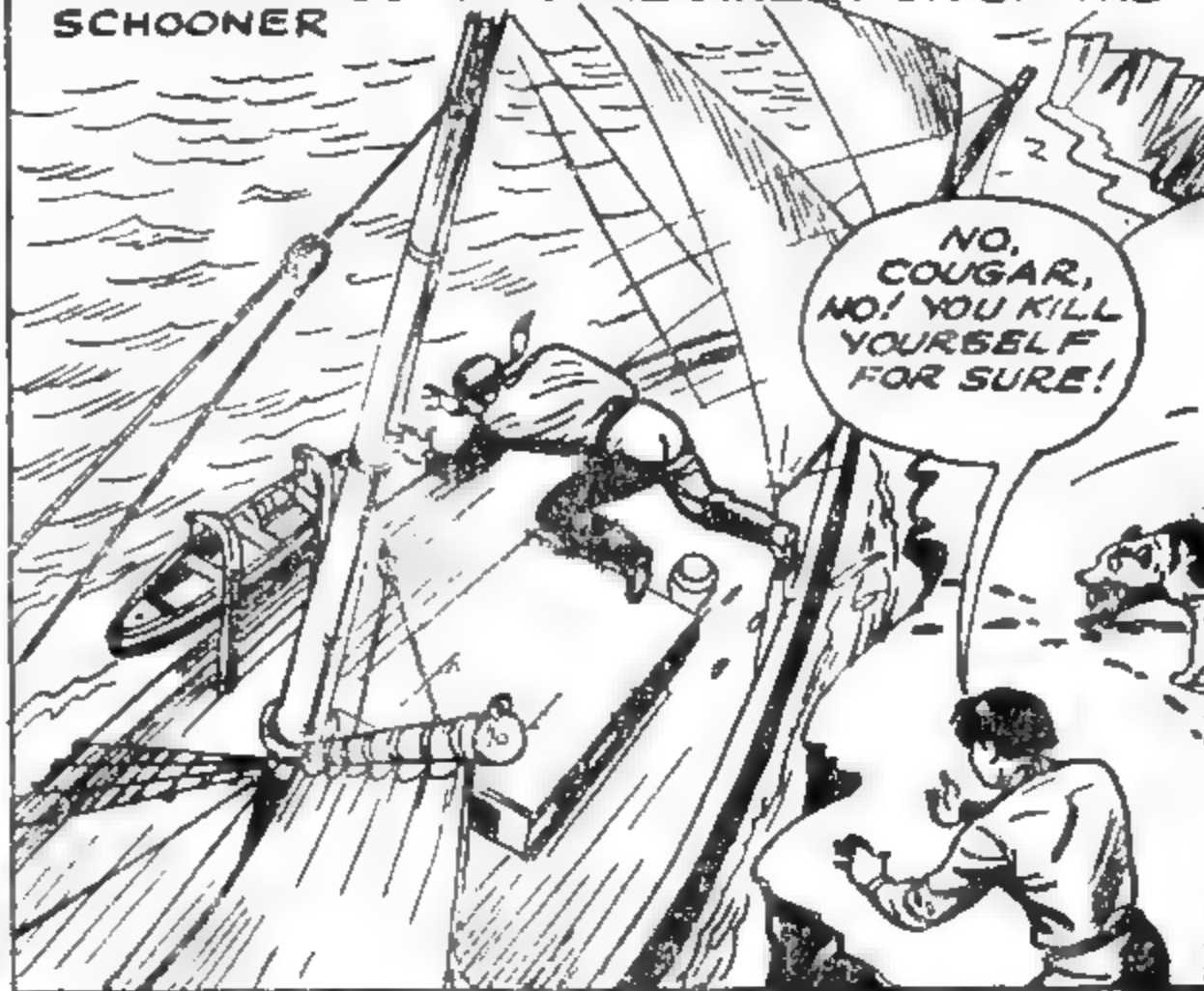
RACING ALONG THE CLIFF TOP, A DESPERATE PLAN TOOK SHAPE IN COUGAR'S MIND

THERE'S ONE WAY OF SAVING HENNESSY'S NUGGET—AND THAT'S TO GO DOWN AND GET IT!



THE NEXT MOMENT, ULIGAK SAW COUGAR TAKE A GIGANTIC JUMP IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SCHOONER

NO, COUGAR, NO! YOU KILL YOURSELF FOR SURE!



BUT COUGAR HAD TIMED HIS DEATH-DEFYING LEAP PERFECTLY

MADE IT! AND NOW FOR DAWSON!



COUGAR SLID DOWN TO THE DECK AND HEADED GRIMLY FOR THE CROOK

I'M COMING FOR YOU, DAWSON. YOU WON'T ESCAPE ME NOW



DAWSON STARED INCREDULOUSLY AT THE MAN HE THOUGHT HE HAD DOOMED TO A LINGERING DEATH. THEN HIS HAND FLASHED TO HIS GUN

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE OR I'LL PLUG YOU, CORRIGAN

JUST TRY IT, YOU THUG!



WHIPPING UP A BELAYING PIN, COUGAR SENT THE GUN FLYING

WHY, YOU—

YOU'VE ONLY GOT YOUR FISTS NOW. USE 'EM!



THE FIGHT THAT FOLLOWED WAS FAST AND FURIOUS. INCH BY INCH DAWSON WAS DRIVEN BACK



AND IT WAS!



COUGAR DREW BACK FROM THE K.O.'D THIEF--TO BE FACED BY A NEWCOMER

I'M THE CAPTAIN OF THIS SHIP. WHAT IN BLAZES IS GOING ON HERE?



COUGAR OPENED DAWSON'S PACK AND TOOK FROM IT AN OBJECT THAT GLITTERED IN THE CLEAR NORTHERN LIGHT

JUMPING MACKEREL! THAT'S A MIGHTY FINE NUGGET

IT SURE IS, SKIPPER. HARD-LUCK HENNESSY'S 1,000-DOLLAR NUGGET--STOLEN BY THAT SKUNK JACK-KNIFE DAWSON



AFTER HEARING COUGAR'S STORY, THE CAPTAIN PUT THE SCHOONER BACK TO DIPPER'S BAR. THERE DAWSON WAS HANDED OVER TO THE MOUNTIES. THEN COUGAR, ULIGAK AND RAJAH HIT THE TRAIL BACK TO HARD-LUCK HENNESSY'S SHACK



HENNESSY COULD SCARCELY BELIEVE HIS EYES WHEN COUGAR RETURNED THE VALUABLE NUGGET

GEE, COUGAR, HOW'M I EVER GONNA THANK YUH FOR THIS? GETTING IT BACK MUST'VE BEEN MIGHTY TOUGH GOING

IT SURE WAS--FOR JACK-KNIFE DAWSON!



THE END

TROOPER TOM IN OPERATION ROCKET-SHELL



PARACHUTING INTO PERIL

WELL, cobber, we've done our job. We've got all the aborigines to safety. There aren't any left in the target area. The Army experts and the scientists can start Operation Rocket-Shell right on time, at noon tomorrow."

Trooper Tom Donnelly, of the North Australian Mounted Police Patrol, grinned with satisfaction at the knowledge of a hard job well done. Jolli, his native black tracker, nodded his curly head and returned the grin.

"You done good job, Trooper Boss," Jolli said, mopping his black face and patting his sweating horse. "Blackfella, them all safe now 'cos Trooper Boss him never stop ridin' 'till all blackfella sent from big bang-bang land."

Tom chuckled at Jolli's description of the target area. It was a rugged square of forbidding and desolate hill country, deep in the barren centre of Northern Australia. Only aborigine tribes inhabited it, and Tom had received orders to move them to safety.

"A massive test bombardment, with a new type of powerful long-range rocket shell, will be pounding those hills, at noon tomorrow," Tom told Jolli, as he halted Ace, his fine police horse, and glanced back

By Guy Deakin

at the grim and precipitous ranges. "Those hills and gullies will be smothered by hundreds of rocket shells."

For the past three weeks Trooper Tom and his black tracker had ceaselessly ranged the barren hills and gulches, rounding up the aborigine tribes and escorting them to safety.

"It's going to be mighty unhealthy in those hills at noon, tomorrow," went on Tom.

He applied a gentle pressure of his heels to Ace. Ace was the finest police horse in the Northern Territory, and horse and rider understood each other perfectly. With a twitch of silken ears, Ace broke into a canter. Jolli, on his sure-footed mount, trotted after the trooper.

"We go police post, now, Boss?" he asked eagerly. Tom shook his head.

"Not yet, Jolli," he said. "We're going to see how that Air Force transport plane, which made a forced landing yesterday, is making out. I reckon they should have completed emergency repairs and be about ready to take off by now."

The sun scorched down from the cloudless sky as Tom and Jolli rode over the dry scrub-land

Out to Save an Injured Prospector Before High-Explosive Rains From the Sky!

Topping a knoll, they saw in the distance the large R.A.A.F. transport plane. Its propellers were slowly turning over.

"Good-oh!" Tom chuckled. "They've got it working. Guess they'll soon be taking off now."

The crew shouted cheerfully to Tom as he trotted up to the big plane. The pilot was testing the engines before starting his run over the rough scrub.

"All set," he yelled through the control window. "But our radio is dead. We must have busted it when we made the forced landing. Hey——"

He gave a sudden cry, and pointed into the distance.

"There's an aboe running like mad towards us, Trooper!" he cried. "He's waving to us to wait."

Tom jerked around on his horse, staring in the direction in which the pilot was pointing. Then, spurring Ace into a gallop, he raced towards the running native. The aborigine broke into a torrent of native speech.

"Crikey!" Tom gasped, then swerved and tore back to the place. "Can you get that radio working?" he yelled up at the pilot. "The aboe says Digger Blake, a gold prospector, is still somewhere in the hills of the target area. He'll be blown to bits if the rocket shell bombardment starts while he's still there."

The radio operator shook his head, helplessly.

"Sorry, chum," he said. "I can't do a thing. The radio is busted wide open."

Tom's brain worked at lightning speed.

"Will you take me and my tracker and our horses up above the hills?" he shouted to the pilot, above the roar of the engines. "Maybe we can spot Digger Blake and signal a message down to him."

"Sure! Hop in!" the pilot yelled back.

Tom leapt from Ace's back and led his mount into the fuselage of the transport.

Jolli followed, a little dubiously, and in a few moments the plane was tearing across the sand. Tom cast a quick glance at his wrist watch. In less than twenty-four hours the mighty bombardment would commence.

The plane roared over the high, rocky hills. Their jagged ridges glinted, hard and forbidding, in the bright sunlight. Tom's and Jolli's eyes searched keenly for a sign of the missing prospector.

From end to end, back and forwards, the big plane zoomed. For a moment Tom began to wonder whether the native's information was correct. Could he have been mistaken? Had Digger Blake made his escape from the doomed target area?

Then, suddenly, Tom tensed.

"The aboe was right," he shouted above the roar of the plane. "There's Digger Blake's camp. But where is Digger?"

The camp was plain to see in a cluster of bushes, but of the prospector there was no sign. Tom frowned in puzzlement. The missing man must have heard the plane—then why had he not shown himself?

"Something must have happened to Digger," he decided. "By golly, I've got to warn him somehow. He probably doesn't know anything about the bombardment at noon tomorrow."

He swung round on the pilot.

"Can you put us and our horses down in the hills?"

"Sorry Trooper." The pilot shook his head. "Those ridges would tear my undercarriage off." Tom's eyes darted to a long rack in the fuselage. A daring plan flashed into his mind.

"How strong are those parachutes?" he asked.

"Tough enough to parachute guns and carriers to the ground," the pilot grinned. "That's what they're for."

"Good," snapped Tom. "Then will you parachute Jolli and me—and our horses—down into the hills?"

The pilot shot Tom an admiring glance.

"Sure, I'll do it," he said.

In a few moments Tom and Jolli were in the fuselage where they helped the crew to fix parachute harness on the two police horses.

Tom donned a parachute and helped Jolli to slip into the harness. Then they waited, tense and expectant.

"Cargo away."

At the word of command from one of the crew, Tom stepped from the plane. A moment later, Jolli followed nervously.

As Tom's 'chute billowed open, he looked up. Above him, the vast canopies of the two horses' parachutes were spread wide open.

As his feet touched earth, Tom ripped off his harness and raced to where the horses were descending. The two startled animals quivered with fear, but Tom's steady voice soothed them.

In a matter of moments he and Jolli were hurriedly unstrapping their mounts from the parachute harness. Above them the plane dipped, then turned and flew away. It could do no more for them.

"Get moving, Jolli," Tom rapped, leaping on to Ace. "We've got to find Digger Blake before it's too late. And then we've got to get clear of the target area before noon tomorrow."

"Will we do it, Trooper Boss?" asked Jolli anxiously.

Tom did not answer. He was gazing around him, a horrified expression dawning on his face. They had landed on a large flat rock, but surrounding it was a widespread mass of sinister-looking impenetrable mud!

"CROCODILE tracks, Jolli!"

Tom's voice broke the silence. He pointed to the rock on which they stood. Then he raised a hand to shield his eyes, and gazed across the marsh.

"And, by crikey, there is a croc!" he gasped.

Over across the sinister stretch of mud, on the opposite bank, he could see a crocodile sunning itself. A gleam of hope came into his eyes.

"Even a croc couldn't swim in that clinging mud," he snapped.

"That means that there must be a water track through it, but we can't see it for the mud scum on the surface."

"Then how we find it, Boss?" asked Jolli.

Tom had already jumped into action. From his saddle bag he took a hunk of dried meat, and placed it on the rock near the edge of the marsh. The hot sun caused its aroma to drift across the marsh.

Keenly the trooper watched. He saw the crocodile stir, lift its head, then waddle swiftly along the edge of the marsh. Suddenly it plunged in. Then it began to swim. But it did not keep a straight course. It turned and twisted as it swam.

"The croc must be following the water course through the marsh," Tom muttered. "My plan's succeeding."

The crocodile's greedy pursuit of the bait was showing the path through the marsh. Breathlessly they watched the reptile reach the rock, climb it, and seize the meat. Then it swam back across the marsh and vanished.

"Hurry, Jolli! Follow me!" rapped Tom.

Wasting no time, he urged Ace into the water where the crocodile had left a trail of disturbed muddy water. Jolli followed, and Tom led his black tracker along the winding water course that led through the marsh.

Tom was the first to reach safety, and he was urging Ace out of the marsh when, behind him, Jolli gave a yell of fright.

Tom jerked himself round in his saddle. Another croc, even bigger than the first they had seen, was slipping into the water. Its cruel, unblinking eyes were fixed on Jolli. The black tracker and his mount were cut off from safety by the crocodile.

Tom dared not risk a shot, for Jolli was in the line of fire. There was only one thing to do. Snatching a long-thonged stock whip from his saddle he whirled it aloft, then sent its raw-hide, thong, zipping across the muddy water.

Thwack!

The whistling thong snaked like a streak of lightning. It struck—full on the crocodile's snout,

then wrapped itself around the vast jaws, muzzling the crocodile helplessly.

Jolli gave a gasp of relief, and urged his horse past the thrashing raging crocodile. Next moment, he was with Tom on the bank. Tom dropped the whip handle, snatched his gun, and pumped lead into the crocodile.

As the reptile collapsed, the sun dipped below the horizon. In a few moments, the light faded, and the tropical night set in.

"We can't do anything more until daybreak," Tom said. "The sun rises at six, and then we'll have just six hours to find Digger Blake and get out of this target area. Make camp, Jolli."

They quickly brewed up a billy-can of tea. After their camp-fire meal, Jolli hurried to the edge of the marsh, where the giant crocodile's body lay. With deft strokes of his sharp hunter's knife, he skinned the massive brute. Crocodile skin was much prized.

Tom was on his feet the second the sun's early shafts broke the sky. Jolli strapped the crocodile skin behind his saddle, and they set off to where they had seen the missing man's camp. Reaching it, Tom cast a searching gaze round him.

"There are Digger's tracks, Jolli," he said, pointing.

Without further bidding, the linx-eyed black tracker set off. Over hard rock and loose stone Jolli followed the trail. Tom followed, riding Ace and leading Jolli's mount.

The police boy suddenly halted.

"Him go there, Boss," he cried.

Tom stared in the direction to which Jolli was pointing.

"He walk, stones slip and he go slide-slide over the edge!" went on Jolli.

Tom gazed in horror at the sharp edge of the cliff along which they had been trailing. Then he leapt from Ace, lay flat on his stomach, and peered over the edge of the cliff. His eyes narrowed. On a ledge some distance below lay the still figure of a white man. It was Digger Blake. His leg was twisted under him, and Tom could see that it was broken.

"Jolli," Tom rapped. "I'm going to lower you by your rope. You must tie the rope round the whitefella, then I'll haul him up. Hurry. We've less than five hours to zero time."

Making the rope fast to Jolli's waist, Tom carefully lowered him over the cliff edge. Cautiously he paid out the rope, and foot by foot the black boy slid down towards the ledge. Then, a sudden yell came from Jolli, and next moment the rope went slack in Tom's grasp.

He threw himself flat and peered over, his eyes grim with anxiety. What had happened to his black pal?

He gasped in horror. The rope dangled—empty. Then Tom saw that it had snapped. A jagged spur of rock had cut through it. But, as he peered down, he thrilled with sudden relief.

Jolli lay on the ledge, beside the white man. He had crashed on to the ledge when the rope parted.

"Me hurt arm. No can use," Jolli cried. "No can help whitefella."

Tom's brain worked at lightning speed. Now he had not only the white prospector to rescue from the ledge, but his black pal, also. And time was getting short!

A MINUTE TO ZERO!

TOM leapt to his horse. Swiftly he hitched his own rope to Ace's saddle. He patted the horse, reassuringly. Ace looked at him, understandingly, then planted its feet firmly, while Tom grasped the rope and lowered himself over the cliff.

Hand over hand he scrambled down to the ledge and swung himself on to it. Wasting not a second, he tied it round Jolli, then lifted his head and gave a peculiar whistle.

Instantly, the rope tautened. Ace knew the signal was a message for him to walk away from the cliff. As he did so, the rope tightened and was drawn upward. With it went the injured Jolli.

"Me safe, Trooper Boss."

The cry rang down to Tom, and a moment later the end of the rope again snaked down the cliff. Tom leaned outward and snatched at it. Looping it under the helpless Digger Blake's armpits, he again gave a whistle. The rope moved upward, carrying the injured man to the cliff top.

"Him O.K., Boss," came Jolli's yell from above. A few seconds later the rope reappeared. Tom grasped it, repeated his whistle, and was steadily hauled back to the cliff top.

"Trooper Boss, him save us both. And Boss's Ace, him much clever," beamed Jolli.

Tom grinned and patted Ace.

"We've got to move fast, Jolli," he said. "I guess you can still ride, in spite of your injured arm, but we can't put Digger Blake on to a horse."

He looked down at the unconscious figure of the prospector, then consulted his watch.

"Crikey," he cried. "The bombardment starts in less than three hours."

"How we carry him, Boss?" asked Jolli.

Tom whipped a bush-knife from his saddle and swiftly hacked two stout poles. To these he bound branches, until he had constructed a rough stretcher.

"Quick give me that croc-skin," he rapped, and Jolli hurriedly unstrapped it from behind his saddle and handed to him, wonderingly.

Tom stretched the tough skin across the boughs. It made a splendid stretcher-cover. To this he tied the stricken man, firmly but gently. As he did so, Digger Blake's eyes flickered open.

"Hey, Trooper," the injured man whispered. "What's cookin', chum?"



Trooper Tom's hissing whip-lash twirled around the attacking croc's jaws, clamping them together. Tom and his black tracker pal little knew that the reptile would later play a great part in their rescue of a stranded prospector!

"We all will be, if we don't get out of these hills mighty quick," was the grim answer. "We're making fast tracks to get away to safety."

"Sorry, chum, but I ain't in no condition to walk," came the faint reply. "Guess you two had best scram, and leave me here."

"Nothing doing," was the brisk retort. "I'm trailing you out on this stretcher like a Redskin travois, behind our horses. It'll be rough going, but I'll get you out, Digger."

As Tom spoke, he was already hitching one end of the improvised stretcher behind Ace's flanks. The other end trailed along the ground. In this manner Tom hoped to tow Digger to safety.

They started off. The going was difficult and slow. The sun climbed higher as Tom led the way, followed by Jolli who was gripping his useless arm courageously.

"How long we got, Trooper?" came Digger's voice behind Tom.

Tom glanced at his watch.

"It's eleven o'clock. We've got an hour to zero. We're nearly at the foot of the hills. Once there, we'll make better pace to the dried watercourse. If we can cross that we can hide in the caves on the far side."

A cry from Jolli announced that they had reached the end of a gully. Riding from its mouth, Tom saw that they had at last reached the foot of the hills. Before them lay the barren scrublands, and in the distance a broken line of stunted, lifeless trees.

"Those stumps mark the dry watercourse," Tom told Digger Blake. "With luck we should reach them in under the hour."

He glanced up at the sun. It was nearing its zenith. Tom eyed it in puzzlement, then looked again at his watch. His face tautened in sudden dismay.

"By crikey," he gritted. "That jump from the plane must have upset my watch."

"What you mean, Boss?" Jolli cried.

"Zero hour can only be a minute or two away!" was the rapid answer. "Jolli, ride for all you're worth. Get across that waterbed, into the caves. I'll make the best time I can with Digger."

"Me stay with Trooper Boss," came the firm reply. Reaching down with his good arm, while he gripped his mount with his knees, Jolli grasped a stretcher pole. "We go fast, both pull whitefella."

Tom glanced at his black tracker approvingly. Together they urged their horses at a faster pace. Behind them, the stretcher lurched and bounced, and Digger Blake gritted his teeth in an effort to hide his pain. At any instant, now, the bombardment would commence.

The line of stumpy trees drew nearer. The pounding of the horses' hooves struck through the still air and echoed back from the high cliffs on the far side of the watercourse.

"Soon be there, Boss," Jolli gasped—then suddenly looked upward.

All above them the air was suddenly filled with terrifying, whistling noise.

Boo-m! Cru-ump! Whoo-sh—Boom!

The ground beneath them heaved and shuddered. Tom and Jolli steadied their alarmed horses. The sky was suddenly aflame with death and destruction. A battery of unseen missiles had hurtled into the hills behind them. It was the opening of the mighty test of new and secret weapons.

"The waterbed, Boss," Jolli yelled, above the roar of the explosions.

He pointed between the tree stumps. As he did so, another tremendous roar of earth-shattering missiles crashed into their ears. It was nearer. The

target was widening. Soon it would include them in its area.

Dragging the crude stretcher behind them, they burst through the screen of stunted trees. Tom gritted his teeth in sudden dismay. The waterbed was no longer dry. A fierce torrent flowed along it, broad and deep, the result of a torrential storm far distant in the Northern hills.

"How we get whitefella across?" Jolli bellowed amid the trembling thunder of the bombardment.

Tom halted at the river's edge. The thunder of doom echoed nearer. With a shattering roar, a rock plateau less than a mile distant erupted into a vast explosion. Debris showered around them and into the river.

Tom acted with lightning speed. Racing to the nearest trees, he slashed branches from them and lashed them into a rough frame. Across it, he strapped the stretcher until it formed a light-weight raft. Digger Blake eyed him questioningly, but Tom had no time to explain.

He gestured to Jolli to follow as he led Ace into the river.

Even the river-bed quivered under the impact of the mighty explosions. The water surged and pounded in huge waves as the shocks beat at its surface. But with grim determination, Tom swam on, guiding Ace. Behind the horse was towed the raft on which lay the helpless gold prospector.

With a whistling scream, a huge missile hurtled into the river. A massive fountain of water shot upward. As it did so, it tossed Tom and Jolli and their horses forward. Next instant the horses' hooves touched bottom.

"Made it," Tom bellowed in triumph.

Ahead of them, a few yards distant, lay the huge face of the cliff towards which he had been struggling. At its foot lay the opening to a deep cave.

"Into the cave, Jolli. We'll stay there until the bombardment is over," cried Tom.

With the stretcher bumping behind them, Tom urged Ace at a gallop into the mouth of the cave. As they raced inside, followed by Jolli and his horse, there came from the edge of the river opposite the mightiest roar of all the explosions.

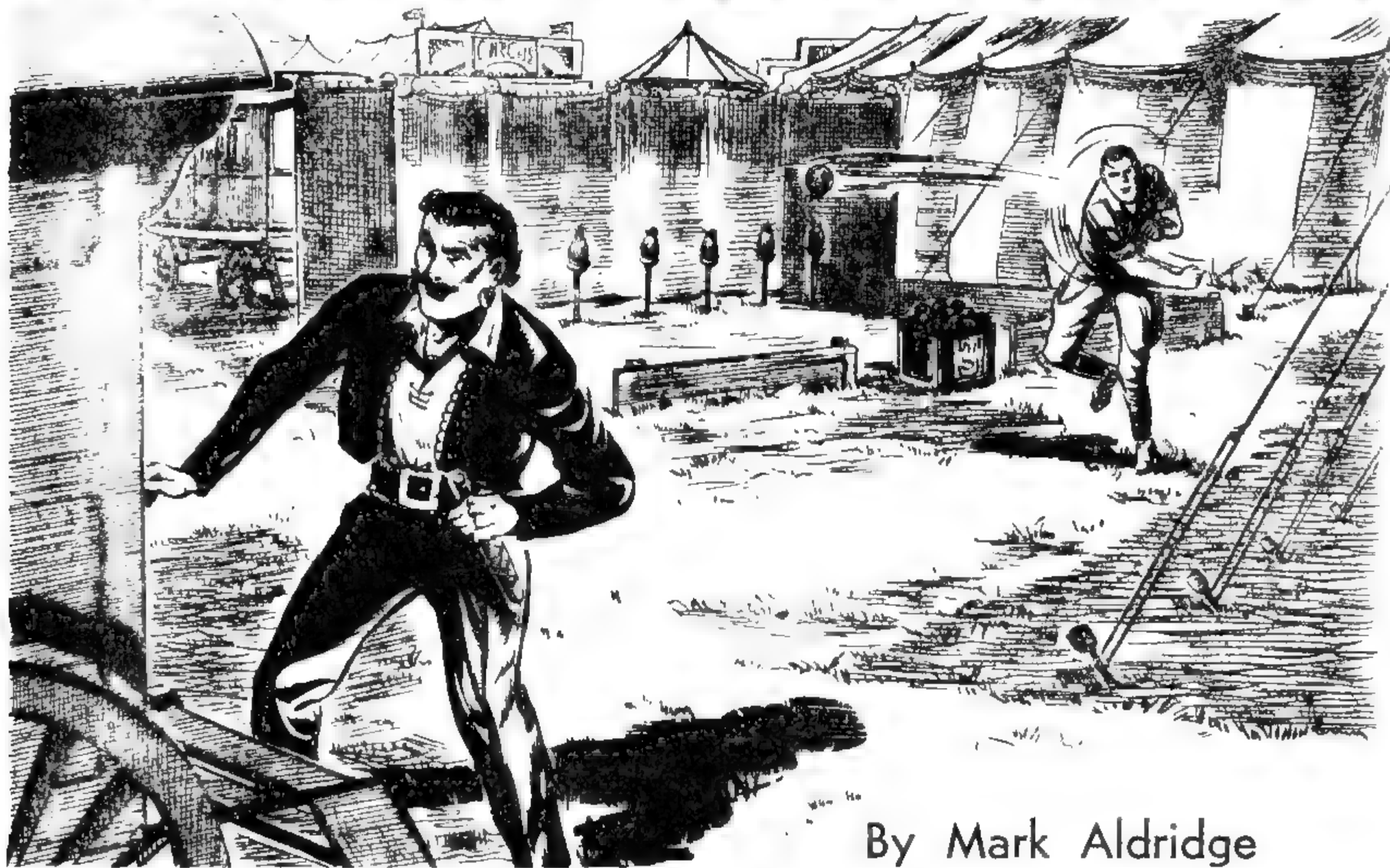
Digger Blake raised his head from the stretcher. He wiped his perspiring face, then looked at Tom.

"Thanks, Trooper," he gasped, holding out his hand. "I figure you've saved all our lives. But for your pluck and guts, we'd never have seen the end of this day."

The three could only smile at each other as they crouched safe and alive—thanks to the skill of Trooper Tom.

THE END

BINGO BAXTER v. THE CIRCUS TRAITOR



By Mark Aldridge

TROUBLE IN THE BIG TOP

GREY eyes sparkling and mouth open in a grin of pure enjoyment, Bingo Baxter, the young circus owner, swooped down on his trapeze from close up under the roof of the big top. The trapeze passed the bottom of its swing and started to zoom upward again.

Suddenly Bingo let go. His lean body curled up in a swift somersault, straightened, then doubled up again, all the time in mid-air. He straightened out again after the daring second somersault and his wide-spread hands reached out to grab the second trapeze that was swinging towards him. It swept him upwards towards the roof where deftly he sprang on to a little platform at the top of the king pole, which took the main strain of the heavy tent.

"Not so bad," he grinned to himself. "I can still do it."

The young circus owner had been one of the most daring trapeze artistes in the country before he inherited the circus from his uncle, and Bingo liked to keep his hand in so that he could fill a gap in the programme—if necessary.

Now he turned to look down on the busy ring beneath him, where all the performers were practis-

ing for the first show that night. Clowns tumbled and pranced and carefully worked out their seemingly casual tricks.

At one side of the ring the two clever artistes were practising on their trampoline, a kind of monster spring-bedstead on which they leaped and somersaulted in the air. At the other side was the low wire, on which Guiseppe Mazzini, the wire-walker, should have been practising. Beyond that was a big board with a human body outlined in chalk on it. The knife thrower, a new act in the circus, was flicking his heavy knives into it with the unerring skill which only comes of constant practice.

"Thump-thump-thump," went the heavy knives, each of them exactly cutting the line.

Bingo frowned.

"Where's Mazzini?" he wondered. "He promised me he'd try the back flip today."

From the ring entrance there suddenly came a loud yell of fear. A moment later a small brown-skinned figure, in flowing robes and bright green turban, came racing in. It was Ram Dass, the snake-charmer.

The Story of a Grim Feud Between a Snake-Charmer and a Wire-Walker

Hard on his heels came the tall, gaunt figure of Mazzini. The wire-walker's hair stood on end and his usually pale face was dark with anger as he raced after the young Indian.

Dodging between the gear, the Indian went racing across the ring, terror in his eyes. Mazzini tore after him. As he rushed past the knife-thrower he snatched up one of the knives.

Brandishing it, he raced after Ram Dass.

Glancing backward over his shoulder, the snake-charmer tripped on his own robes and fell flat on his face. Mazzini whooped in triumph, and his knife rose as he charged forward. It looked as if murder would be done.

Bingo's face hardened, and with a quick leap he sent himself swooping down across the ring, on the trapeze. At the bottom of his swing he flung himself forward. But he did not hit the sawdust. He had judged his moment perfectly.

He landed square in the middle of the trampoline. The springs sagged and then rebounded. Twisting in the air, Bingo was shot forward again.

Crash!

Bingo hit the wire-walker just as he raised the knife to strike at the snake-charmer on the ground beneath.

Both men hit the ground with a thump. But Bingo was on top. He snatched the knife from the other's grasp.

"Pack it up—and quick!" Bingo snapped.

Slowly Mazzini and Ram Dass got to their feet. The wild anger had gone from Mazzini's face. But there was cold hatred in its place as he looked at the snake-charmer, who now wore a cheeky grin.

"Signor Boss," Mazzini snapped. "I weesh to resign. No more ees zeers circus beeg enough for me—and heem."

He pointed an accusing finger at Ram Dass.

"Heem and hees nasty, evil snakes. I can stand zem no more."

Now Ram Dass showed his anger.

"Nasty? Evil? My snakes are not evil. They are cleaner than any snakes—anywhere."

"Now then," Bingo said soothingly. "Simmer down. What seems to be the trouble?"

Since the two performers had come to the circus, there had been nothing but ill-feeling between them. Mazzini had a mysterious but overpowering terror of snakes, and to conceal it he pretended they disgusted him. Ram Dass, for his part, took this as an insult and lost no chance of getting his own back on the wire-walker.

"Terrouble?" echoed the Italian, eyes rolling upward in his head. "I tell you what ees the terrouble. Zees—zees worm-collector, he ees putting hees horrible snakes in my bath—"

"Trouble, sahib?" Ram Dass broke in. "It is this man who is making trouble. Every day he is

making trouble with me, and today he is throwing my beautiful snakes out of the bath, which is only place where they keep cool. And maybe they get hurt when they hit the ground and—"

As his sing-song voice seemed likely to continue, Bingo cut him short.

"That's enough. Both of you should be ashamed of yourselves. You should know a circus has to work like a family. There has to be give and take. I'll speak to you both later. But as for now—well, it's time you were hard at work—practising."

Mazzini's lips tightened for a moment.

"For you, I practeese no more," he snorted. "Theese circus ees not beeg enough for heem and me. I queet!"

He stalked from the ring. Bingo shrugged his shoulders. It was not the first time the wire-walker had resigned.

"Sahib, I too am resigning," Ram Dass declared. "My snakes, they do not like it to be called worms, filthy worms at that. I am quitting too."

Head high and robes trailing, he too stalked from the ring.

Bingo sighed.

"Temperamental—that's what those guys are! Now I suppose I'll have to go and tell them what nice fellows they are. I can't afford to lose either of them. They've been featured on all our posters, and if they're not in the ring the customers will want their money back. They're both good fellows, too, if only they'd leave each other alone."

Before he could follow the pair to the caravans, a clown came over and asked Bingo's opinion on a new bit of "business" he had just worked out. Bingo had a few suggestions of his own to make. Then, thoughtfully he headed for the caravans of his two troublesome stars.

Mazzini was rushing round his caravan, throwing things into a suitcase. But Bingo managed to calm him down at last, and the wire-walker then promised he would stay for that day's show at least. For the future, well, he would think about it.

"But zeers snakes!" he hissed. "I must not see zem again or I go—pronto."

The snake-charmer was packing as well when Bingo reached his caravan, but after Bingo had listened to a long list of complaints and a harangue about Mazzini, Ram Dass also agreed to stay—provided the wire-walker kept away from him, and did not touch his snakes.

"Thank goodness for that," Bingo breathed, as he headed back to the Big Top. "If I can get tonight's show over, they'll have cooled down by tomorrow. But it's all so darned silly. I'd like to knock their heads together."

"If only I could cure Mazzini of his feeling about snakes," Bingo thought. "I'm sure he and Ram Dass would get on."

Meanwhile preparations for the show went ahead. All the gaudy paraphernalia of the circus was set up—the side-shows, the roundabouts, the miniature zoo. Then the crowds began to file into the tober, the name by which circus people call their field.

Bingo donned his ringmaster's outfit of red coat, white breeches and top boots. He made a last quick check-up of the acts, making sure that everyone was ready to go on.

He was just about to enter Mazzini's caravan when he heard a faint thud. A moment later there was a gasp of fear.

Bingo swung open the caravan door and darted in.

"Mazzini! What's wrong?" Bingo gasped.

Mazzini had his back against one wall, an open window behind him. His face was chalky white and he was pointing at the opposite wall.

A knife was stuck in that wall, and from its blade hung a note.

It bore only one word: "Tonight!"

There was no signature, but at the bottom of the note there was a crude drawing of a black snake.

The wire-walker seemed dazed.

"Mazzini! Mazzini!" Bingo shook him roughly. "What's wrong with you, man? What's the matter?"

The Italian shook himself but his eyes never left the note.

"Ze matter, signor?" he croaked. "Ze matter ees zat tonight I die!"

THE SINISTER SECRET SOCIETY!

FOR a moment Bingo looked at him in amazement. Then, in broken sentences, he dragged the wire-walker's story from him.

In his youth, Mazzini had belonged to an Italian secret society known as The Snake. It had been formed in the war to fight the Germans. He had been proud to be a member.

But after the war new bosses had taken control. Instead of patriots out to serve their country, the society turned into a crooked syndicate.

Mazzini had left the society—or thought he had. But The Snake did not give up its members so easily. He had been ordered to do certain jobs, and had refused. Fearing vengeance, he had fled his homeland and taken up a circus life. He had felt sure he was safe.

Then that knife had flashed through the window. The Snake always warned its victims before they died.

"Now, signor, you see why zee snakes of ze snake-charmer upset me. When I see zem—I zink of Ze Snake," Mazzini groaned. "And tonight Ze Snake is come for me. Tonight I die."

"Oh no you don't," Bingo snapped. "Tonight you go on and give the show of your life. And as

for this Snake fellow—well the police can deal with him."

"Not—not ze police!" Mazzini begged. "In Ze Snake, we swore zat never will we go to ze police. And if we go, eet ees not us alone who suffer but ze friends and family also."

Despite Bingo's urgings, Mazzini was firm in his decision. The police must not be called in.

"Then what are we to do?" Bingo demanded. "Of course I'll have the whole circus on the alert, and if anyone tries anything, well—"

Mazzini shook his head.

"I have but ze one hope," he said. "Eet lays een ze rule of Ze Snake zat ze victim ees told when he weel die. Eef ze keeler fail and ze veecteem do not die zen—zen he go free. Eef I live out tonight—zen everything will be all right!"

To Bingo's surprise, Mazzini was quite willing—and eager, in fact—to go on with his performance.

"Here in ze caravan he find me. Out zere in ze ring he find me but cannot reach," he said. "So I give ze show."

Bingo then decided to stay with the wire-walker until it was time for the show to start. And when he had to leave to announce the first act, Bingo called in four burly ring hands.

"Stay with Signor Mazzini," he told them. "Don't let any stranger come near him."

As he announced the first act, and a team of liberty horses cantered into the ring, Bingo's mind was hard at work.

He wondered where the secret killer might be. Was he in one of the ringside seats? Was he higher up? How would he strike? Probably, Bingo thought, he would use a knife. The way that knife bearing its message had been flicked through the window showed that the killer must have no uncertain skill with the weapon.

"If only I knew what kind of man to look for," mused Bingo, as he gazed round the lines of packed people before him.

Bingo realised his only hope lay in spotting the killer before he had time to act. To throw a knife, a man would have to stand up—and therefore he would be very conspicuous, and liable to be spotted by the people around him. With a shrug, Bingo walked out into the ring to announce the next act.

It was a daring act by many snarling tigers, who gave a thrilling display under their trainer. Uneasily Bingo noticed that Sheba, a huge tigress, was in a bad temper. Several times the trainer had to snatch up a chair to protect himself when the snarling beast made as if to attack him.

The act reached its climax. Then the tigers scurried out through the long barred tunnel to their cages, and Mazzini's low wire was set up.

The big cage that surrounded the ring for the tiger act was left in position, for after Mazzini

would come Ram Dass with his snakes, and after Ram Dass came an act by a troupe of bears.

With his bodyguard of circus hands, Mazzini entered the ring. He climbed up to the platform above his wire to begin his act.

"He should be safe enough there," Bingo breathed. "In the middle of the ring he should be out of range of a knife thrower."

Perhaps after all this commotion he'd be finally able to settle the quarrel between Mazzini and Ram Dass!

He turned to the knife-thrower who was waiting beside the entrance tunnel.

"Just supposing someone was trying to throw a knife at Mazzini, could they do it from here?" Bingo asked.

For a moment there was a startled look in the knife-thrower's hard, grey eyes. Then he smiled and shook his head.

"I do not think so," he drawled. "It is too far—and there are the cage bars also. It would be hard to throw through them."

Bingo nodded thoughtfully. Then the killer would not be going to make his attempt just now, he decided. That is, if he intended to use a knife.

Ram Dass came out with his baskets, containing his snakes, and set them ready at the ringside.

"Keep an eye on them," Bingo warned. "I promised Mazzini he wouldn't see them again."

He didn't want any more trouble on *that* score.

He turned to watch the Italian. There was a slow roll of drums as he walked gracefully out along his swaying, slack-wire. He began to jump up and down, landing unerringly all the time.

Then came an amazed gasp from the crowd. With perfect timing, Mazzini leapt into the air and did a perfect back flip to land again on the wire. Swiftly he repeated the feat.

"He's good," Bingo breathed. "Really good. Thank goodness I've been able to keep him in the show."

As Mazzini went on with his act, Bingo was struck by the intent look in Ram Dass's eyes. A sudden thought struck him.

"How did The Snake know Mazzini was here? The only way they could have found out was through one of the circus people. Is one of them a spy for The Snake?" he muttered.

From what little he knew of secret societies, Bingo could guess that they would have their members in every walk of life. It was quite possible that one of his own men was the secret killer. Maybe even one of the men he had set to guard the wire-walker. But who? Until the killer struck he would not know. Then it might be too late.

There was a sudden shout from the crowd.

"The tigers! Look! The tigers!"

Bingo gasped—what had gone wrong? What were the big beasts doing out of their cage?

Down the tunnel from their cage were trotting three of the tigers, led by Sheba. Bingo sprang forward to shut the gate into the ring, but he was just too late.

The gate closed on Sheba's body. With one powerful thrust the tigress forced its way through.

Snarling, it looked up at the man balancing on the wire only six feet above. Powerful muscles quivered in its legs and its tail lashed once.

Then, like an avenging arrow of striped fury, the tigress sprang

THE KILLER REVEALED!

MAZZINI had heard the crowd's cry. He saw the tigress burst into the ring. He saw it leap. And as it leapt, Mazzini repeated his amazing backflip. The tigress sailed clean over the wire, missing him by inches. As it hit the sawdust it turned and crouched for a second spring.

"Where's the trainer?" Bingo shouted desperately.

How on earth had the tigress got into the ring?

A circus hand came running forward.

"I just seen the trainer, chief," he gasped. "He's lying up by the cages—out for the count!"

Now Bingo understood. This was the work of the secret society.

The tigress leaped again. Once again Mazzini sprang lightly along the wire. But now the other two tigers in the ring had seen him. Though they were both formidable beasts, in the ordinary way, they were more interested in this new game Sheba had found.

While Mazzini faced Sheba, one of the others sprang at him from behind. Just in time Mazzini moved. Then the tigers were leaping at him from both sides at once.

With wonderful agility the wire-walker leaped and turned on his slender wire, avoiding attack after attack. The crowd was roaring its head off now, sure that this was some new and daring act.

Bingo's mouth was a hard, set line. With the trainer out of the way, it was left to him to save the wire-walker from the tigers. And time was growing short.

Mazzini's wire was slung from two tripods in the centre of the ring. Neither of them was within twenty feet of the cage bars.

"He can't last out—they'll get him," groaned a circus hand. "They're bound to knock him off that wire soon."

Usually when the tigers were in the ring there were pitchforks and crowbars placed nearby, in case they attacked the trainer. But when the act was over, the pitchforks were removed. There

seemed no way of driving off the tigers. Suddenly Bingo sprang to the snake-charmer's side.

"Quick!" he snapped. "Your snakes. Into the ring with them—all of them."

Ram Dass looked at him for a moment in amazement. Then he understood. Swiftly he threw off the covers of his baskets and boldly plunged his hands into the writhing mass of bodies. Grabbing up handful after handful of the snakes he thrust them through the bars into the ring.

At the same time, Bingo was swarming up the bars of the cage. "Mazzini!" he yelled. "This way!"

The Italian turned his head. He saw Bingo at the top of the cage, unhooking a trapeze. He saw too that when the trapeze swung down, it would not reach the wire. Mazzini braced himself to jump.

Then he saw the snakes.

Abject terror filled his eyes and Bingo saw that he was paralysed with fear. Bingo saw, too, that Sheba was about to spring. There was only one thing for it.

Clinging to the trapeze, Bingo threw himself forward and downward. As he swooped towards Mazzini, he jerked his hands loose from the trapeze and doubled himself up in a ball.

"Woomph!"

He hit the crouching tigress from behind, just as it was about to spring. It was knocked flying. In the same moment Bingo straightened himself, leapt from the wire, and grabbed Mazzini by the ankle.

With a cry of fear Mazzini fell. Sheba, roaring furiously, had turned to spring on her new attacker.

"Now we die," groaned Mazzini, covering his face.

"Oh no we don't," snapped Bingo.

Grabbing Mazzini round the waist, he hurled him towards the side of the ring.

In the same movement he stooped and grabbed up one of the advancing snakes. He threw it straight into the tigress's snarling face just as it was on the point of leaping. The tiger backed away, spitting fury.

Then Bingo sprang over the line of advancing snakes and dragged Mazzini towards the door of

the cage. As the gate clanged shut Sheba roared again.

But there was a new note in the roar—a note of fear. Looking through the bars Bingo saw that the three tigers were cowering together against the bars. A half circle of snakes was advancing slowly towards them across the sawdust.

And at the ringside Ram Dass was playing a strangely shaped, bulbous flute. As he played, the snakes moved forward, first on one side then the other. Gradually the tigers backed away before the snakes. Then one of them noticed the open gate



"Tonight I die!" croaked Mazzini, terrified. Bingo stared grimly at the sinister message on the caravan wall. Who was threatening the wire-walker—and why?

of the tunnel behind it. With a glad snarl, it turned and raced from the ring, back to its own cage. Swiftly, the others followed.

"Zey—zey are afraid!" gasped Mazzini. "Zey are more afraid zan me."

"And with as little reason," Bingo answered. "Those snakes have all had their poison fangs removed."

He turned away. The animal trainer was swaying towards them, down the passage from the dressing tent.

"Where the heck's that durn knife-thrower?" he demanded thickly. "I'll—I'll teach him to flatten me when I'm not looking—"

"Then it was the knife-thrower who actually knocked you out?" Bingo demanded.

"It sure was," the animal trainer replied. "And when I get my hands on him—"

Bingo did not wait to hear him finish. From what the trainer had said, it was plain who was The Snake's secret killer.

"Of course," Bingo muttered. "I should have known it was him. No one else in the circus could have thrown that knife into Mazzini's caravan. I've got to find him—to get him before he tries again."

Desperately he swung round looking for the knife-thrower. But he was nowhere to be seen. Already the ring was being made ready for the next act.

Mazzini too had gone, to his caravan Bingo guessed. When he realised this a cold shiver ran down Bingo's spine. The wire-walker would not realise yet that the knife-thrower was the killer, and was in deadly peril.

Bingo burst into a run. He sprinted out of the Big Top towards Mazzini's caravan, hoping against hope that he would be in time.

Darting round the corner of a coconut-shy stall, Bingo saw the caravan ahead. The killer, knife in hand, was just mounting the steps. Bingo would never reach the caravan in time. The knife-thrower would open the door inside the next second!

Bingo swerved to the front of the stall and snatched up one of the heavy wooden balls. In the same swift movement he threw it with all his strength.

"Zonk!"

The heavy ball hit the knife-thrower at the base of the neck. It knocked him clean out. Darting forward, Bingo swung himself up into the caravan.

"Mazzini!" he called. "It's all right. I've got the killer."

He halted in amazement. Mazzini was not there.

When he had secured the killer, Bingo went to search for the wire-walker. To Bingo's surprise he found him with Ram Dass. Indian and Italian were together, stroking the charmer's gleaming snakes. Bingo blinked at the sight. It looked like the quarrel was over—at last!

"Ah, Signor Boss," beamed the Italian. "I have ze news for you. No longer am I afraid of ze snakes. Since zey save my life, I know now ze snake is my friend. And I know somezing else. Ze snake eet ees not filthy. Eet ees clean and smooth and pleasant to ze touch."

Bingo began to smile. It looked as if the attempt on Mazzini's life had not been altogether such a bad thing. Then he told Mazzini of how he had trapped the killer.

"Only one thing worries me now," Bingo concluded. "What do we do with the crook? You don't want the police to interfere. Yet if we turn him loose he may make another attempt on your life."

Mazzini shook his head.

"For him, I am sorry now," he said. "For eet ees ze rule of Ze Snake zat eef ze killer fail, zen wiz his own life he pay. I zink he weel be a very, very unhappy man. I zink zat he weel do much running. Perhaps he weel escape."

Bingo began to smile. But it was not at the thought of the tables being turned to such a degree. He was thinking of the excited roars of the crowds when Mazzini had been balancing above the tigers. Maybe he had lost one act, in the person of the knife-thrower, but oh boy—he'd certainly landed a humdinger in exchange!

THE END



ANSWERS TO "WORLD-WIDE QUIZ" (See page 16)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1. A Jeep. The name is derived from "G.P."—short for General Purposes car. | 6. He means that payment for the fish should be made to the assistant who delivers it. The letters stand for "Cash on Delivery." | 12. An Alaskan meat cache, so built to prevent animals stealing the contents. |
| 2. Sometimes. But they usually sleep standing up. | 7. The Whipper-in. | 13. Yes. Mexicans don't have pigtails. |
| 3. Each feather represents a deed honoured by the tribe. | 8. The first. | 14. A panorama. |
| 4. That the race has been stopped. | 9. The bush baby, the boomerang and the budgerigar all originated in Australia. | 15. Yes. North should be opposite to South, and East opposite to West. |
| 5. No. Don Juan was by Byron; Kim by R. Kipling; Hamlet by W. Shakespeare. | 10. Fire-beaters. | 16. Welders. |
| | 11. The Battle of Trafalgar. | 17. Radio transmissions. It's a B.B.C. aerial. |

The Legend of Darra River

BY
HUGH TEMPEST



A FLOATING SPECTRE

"IF my luck is in I shall be seeing something of this supposed demon before the day is out!"

Rob Carmichael stood in the stern of a canoe that was being paddled up a wide river in the East Indies. Dense tropical jungle lined both banks—jungle so dense that the eye was unable to penetrate it.

Rob was the Assistant Commissioner of the Darra District, and he knew that he was starting out on what might prove to be the most hazardous expedition of his life.

Trouble had come to the district. For many weeks now the rubber and coffee plantations, and even the Dyak native villages themselves, had been deserted. All the natives had disappeared, and nobody knew where they had gone. This was the strange mystery that Rob was determined to solve.

It had taken time to discover the reason for the natives' disappearance. But at last a rumour had reached Rob's ears that a weird and mysterious demon had appeared in the Darra River. It was because of the demon that the natives had fled.

The half-dozen Dyaks who made up Rob's crew paddled on steadily, but it was obvious they were all

ill at ease. All the time they kept casting frightened glances towards the dense walls of the jungle—as though they feared the demon would appear at any moment, ready to pounce.

It was as the river began to narrow that the Dyaks suddenly ceased to paddle. Cries of alarm escaped them, and fearfully they pointed to a gleaming white object which hung suspended from the branch of a tree.

It was a human bone!

"'Tis a taboo sign, bwana!" one of them cried in terror. "Death will come to us if we go on!"

Rob had been too long in Borneo not to know when he was up against the impossible. Nothing he could do could persuade his crew to proceed further up river. Yet, if the mystery was to be solved, he *must* go on.

If only there was some way of beating the taboo!

"Kabala the witch doctor!" he almost cried aloud. "He lives near here. My men will paddle on if he gives them a charm against the taboo."

The Dyaks were only too pleased to paddle into a small backwater. Here Rob scrambled out, ordering them to await his return.

What Sinister Secret Does the Water-Monster Guard? Rob is Determined to Find Out!

Getting to the house of Kabala, the witch doctor, proved to be a most difficult task. Although Rob kept as close as possible to the river bank he had to cut a path through the dense undergrowth time and time again.

"And he may not be at home when I get there," Rob muttered. "If so I'm sunk!"

But at last he came to a small clearing, in the centre of which stood a solitary tree. High among its branches a Dyak hut had been built.

This was the witch doctor's home.

Rob cupped his hands to his mouth.

"Kabala!" he called. "The white man, Carmichael, seeks speech with you!"

He listened, but no sound came from the hut high above his head. Fearing that his journey had been wasted after all, he called again. Almost without warning a ladder of twisted vines then unrolled itself to the ground. This was a sign that Kabala was at home and that he was bidding his visitor to enter!

Quickly Rob climbed the swaying ladder—he had to bend low to enter the small doorway of the hut. As he straightened himself he let his eyes become accustomed to the gloom. Only then did he see the frightening figure of Kabala.

The witch doctor was sitting cross-legged in the darkest corner of the hut, and his head and shoulders were completely covered with the most grotesque head-dress Rob had ever seen.

"Why come you to me, white man?" the witch doctor enquired.

Rob squatted down facing him, with his back against the wall just inside the doorway. Quietly he spoke of the disappearance of the natives and of the mysterious river demon.

"It is known that you are a friend of the white men, Kabala," he said. "Always it has been your wish to help the Great White Queen."

"What seek you of me, white man?" the witch doctor enquired, in an expressionless voice.

"I seek a charm against the river taboo," Rob told him, "a safeguard I can show to the Dyaks in my canoe. If they know that you are protecting them, O Kabala, they will not hesitate to take the canoe up river."

Breathlessly he waited for the witch doctor's reply. And then all his high hopes were dashed to the ground.

"Kabala not able to help you, white man," he was told. "Kabala great witch doctor, but Kabala also fear river demon. You wish to live—you go back!"

Rob tried to argue with him. He tried flattery. But all to no purpose. Kabala insisted it was certain death to venture further up the Darra River.

But he only succeeded in making Rob's determination stronger than ever. Rob had set out on an

expedition, and it would take more than a witch doctor to stop him. Somehow or other he would still persuade his Dyaks to continue up the river.

"Old Kabala is as crooked as they make 'em," he told himself. "But he's still going to help me. I'll borrow one of his charms."

Unseen by the witch doctor he carefully detached a necklace of crocodiles' teeth that hung on the wall directly behind him. When he took a ceremonial leave of Kabala the necklace was in his possession.

Then he returned along the path he had cut. Triumphantly he showed his Dyaks the necklace of teeth.

"No longer need we fear the taboo," he cried. "No harm can come to us no matter how far we go. For see—here is one of Kabala's magic charms."

And ceremoniously he draped the necklace over the bows of the canoe.

It was amazing to witness the comfort this brought to his Dyaks. Not a single voice was raised in protest when Rob ordered them to continue the voyage upstream.

But as the paddles dug steadily into the turgid water, a pair of eyes watched from the bushes near Kabala's home. They belonged to Kabala himself.

Suddenly a curt exclamation escaped the witch doctor, and he backed out of the bushes. Still muttering angrily to himself he hastily started to make his way along the river bank.

INTO ACTION AGAINST THE PHANTOM

"I DON'T wonder the Dyaks fear this river."

It was some time later and Rob was well on his journey. The river had narrowed so much that now the upper branches of the trees on either side were forming a natural archway. Slowly the daylight was being cut out from over them, and Rob had the impression that he was entering a dark tunnel.

But the Dyaks still paddled steadily on, for the necklace of teeth about the bows of the canoe showed up clearly in the gathering gloom.

On and on the craft continued until it seemed to Rob that there was a solid roof above him, and he had to strain his eyes to pierce the darkness ahead.

Round a sharp bend the canoe made its way and then——

Every Dyak shouted aloud in terror! The canoe hit the bank with such a jerk that Rob nearly pitched head foremost over the bows.

"The demon! The demon!"

For a fleeting second the natives' panic almost made itself felt in the white man's spine. What unknown phantom had caused this outburst? Suddenly the reason became clear. Directly ahead two enormous eyes were blazing at the canoe! And behind the eyes was the vague outline of some grotesque body.

"Flee! Flee!"

No wonder the Dyaks were crazed with panic. Desperately they strove to turn the canoe, and this provided a second danger.

"Steady!" Rob gasped in quick alarm. "You'll have us over! Look out!—"

Next moment he was leaping into the river, his rifle above his head, as the canoe keeled over—throwing out all its occupants.

As he landed waist deep in water Rob's wits came flooding back. He did not believe in demons—there was trickery here!

"This is what I came out to solve," he told himself as he waded quickly for the nearest bank.

But the Dyaks had no intention of making for the banks. Many hands gripped the canoe and then they were scrambling back into it. Within a matter of seconds their paddles were biting deep into the water, and the canoe was shooting back the way it had come.

Rob was being left to his fate!

Keeping as low as possible he scrambled up the bank. Trying to make no sound at all he began to creep along it.

For those mighty eyes still blazed!

"I'll believe in demons when they survive a rifle bullet," Rob told himself grimly.

Yard by yard he made his way forward till he was almost abreast of the strange object. It seemed to him then that an enormous crocodile was lying on the surface of the water. But surely no crocodile could possess such huge and blazing eyes?

In the very act of lifting his rifle to his shoulder Rob suddenly paused. Something had moved just ahead of him along the bank. Carefully parting a bush he strained his eyes. Surely he could see an indistinct, crouching figure?

"I knew it," he told himself exultantly. "There is a trickster at work here. The demon can wait for a moment."

Even more carefully he began to work his way in a half circle. He wanted

to come upon the unknown person without warning. And then, with only a yard or so to go, his eyes opened wide in amazement.

"Kabala!" he breathed.

For the figure bending down behind the bush wore the same grotesque head-dress that Kabala had worn in his tree-top hut. Somehow he had succeeded in getting up river ahead of the canoe.

"So *he's* mixed up in the mystery," flashed Rob's thoughts. "I might have known it. No wonder he tried to stop me going any further. He must have seen me leave, and came up here in order to frighten my men with his demon."

Carefully he placed his rifle on the ground.

"And now," he told himself grimly, "Kabala is going to give me a very full explanation."

He came to his feet and he had launched himself into the air before the witch doctor realised his danger. The man turned like a wild animal at bay, but Rob bore him heavily to the ground. The struggle that ensued was one that Rob was to remember for the rest of his life. The witch doctor seemed possessed of ten men's strength, and half a dozen times Rob almost gave himself up for lost.

Back and forth along the precarious river bank the



In a headlong dive, Rob flung himself at the evil witch-doctor. The young commissioner strongly suspected that the native was linked with the demon which was now haunting Darra River!

two men fought like crazy wildcats—it was touch and go for several punch-swapping minutes who was going to come out on top.

The, his strength almost gone, Rob was able to use an old wrestling trick—a trick that sent the witch doctor crashing to the ground and knocked all the fight out of him.

After that Kabala had no chance at all. When at last he was able to breathe easily again he was securely bound with stout vines.

“And now,” Rob said grimly, “we’ll talk.”

With that he dragged off the grotesque head-dress, and found himself gazing at one of the most evil-looking Dyaks he’d ever seen. He was the first white man ever to set eyes on the witch doctor’s face.

“Start talking!” Rob rapped. “You’re in this demon business up to your neck. What’s behind it, Kabala?”

The witch doctor stared back at him viciously, but that was all. Quickly he made it obvious that no matter what happened he would not open his mouth.

“Don’t worry,” Rob declared when his patience was exhausted. “You’ll talk sooner or later. But now that you’re my prisoner I’ve an idea I can find out everything for myself.”

Only then did he see that a length of twisted vine had been tied to the bush behind which the witch doctor had been crouching. The end of it dropped down into the river, and the moment Rob pulled it a weird crocodile-shaped construction swung through the water towards him.

A few moments later and the young Assistant Commissioner was almost laughing out loud. For it was indeed a huge rubber crocodile that he had pulled into the bank!

“The light must come from a couple of electric torches placed behind its eyes,” he decided.

It took him only a second or two to find the plug which released the air from the “demon,” and then it was only a limp length of thin rubber that he lifted on to the bank. As he had thought, two small electric torches had been fastened behind the eyes of the contraption.

“There must be something near this river you’re trying to hide, Kabala,” Rob said then. “And it must have a lot to do with the disappearance of all the natives. Well, you can’t stop me searching for ’em now.”

When Rob left the scene, Kabala was hanging by his armpits from a branch high above his head. Rob had hauled him up to the branch so that he would be safe from the prowling wild animals of the jungle.

When he walked away, the rubber contraption flung over his shoulder, Rob was in a state of the highest excitement. For he had discovered a narrow

jungle track—a track which was obviously used very frequently. Surely it would lead to whatever Kabala had been trying to hide?

But the mystery had become even more puzzling. The explanation of the rubber demon was simple—it had been used to frighten away all traffic upon the river.

But the demon did not explain why all the natives had fled from their villages! Yet Kabala was responsible for their disappearance—of that Rob was now positive.

“Maybe the explanation lies at the end of this track,” he told himself excitedly.

Quickly he made his way forward. Presently he realised that the trees were beginning to thin out—that he was approaching the edge of the jungle. He moved with the greatest caution. And soon, surrounded by bushes only, he made his way up a steep slope. No sooner did he reach the top than he flung himself flat.

One glance had been sufficient to show him that he had solved the mystery of the Darra River!

THE WHITE WITCH DOCTOR!

“GOSH! If this doesn’t beat everything!” Rob’s eyes almost started from his head as he gazed at the scene below him. Some distance ahead was a quarry-like precipice, and natives appeared to be swarming all over it. He could see some were using pickaxes, others using shovels, and others trundling wheel-barrows.

So it must be to work in this quarry-like place that the Dyaks of the district had left their plantations and their homes. But what were they quarrying?

And then Rob saw two white men. Both of them were heavily armed, and they were slowly patrolling on the fringe of the working natives.

“That rubber contraption should have told me white men were mixed up in the mystery,” Rob told himself. “No native could have made such a thing.”

But now that he had come upon this strange place, what was he to do about it? He knew beyond question that the natives were working here by Kabala’s orders. The witch doctor was the only man who could have frightened the natives away from their homes and forced them to do heavy manual work. Kabala must have been working hand in glove with the two unknown white men.

If Rob showed himself, the chances were he would be immediately shot.

Yet he hated the idea of returning back to Headquarters without doing anything about the situation.

And then something warned him of imminent danger. He turned his head—to receive another

shattering shock. A figure was creeping through the bushes behind him—the figure of a native wearing a grotesque head-dress.

"Kabala!" Rob gasped in utter amazement.

Kabala had somehow succeeded in making his escape!

He had followed after the young Assistant Commissioner, and now Rob's presence was about to be revealed to the two white men and the Dyaks. In a matter of seconds the chances were he would be surrounded by blood-thirsty, angry natives.

"Not if I know it," Rob told himself grimly. "Nobody's going to stop me getting the low-down on this mystery now."

In fact he no sooner saw the creeping figure than he jerked his rifle to his shoulder. And his finger was white upon the trigger when he received yet another shattering shock.

"Don't fire, Carmichael!" came a hoarse voice. "Don't give yourself away whatever you do."

No wonder Rob's eyes bulged again. The creeping figure had spoken with the voice of a white man!

And then the man he had thought to be Kabala was lying alongside him, and gazing at the quarry-like scene. For a long time he gazed upon it and then he slid back a little way out of sight. Only then did he take off the head-dress, and Rob found himself looking into the face of a white stranger.

"Yes," this latter said, "I was the witch doctor you saw in Kabala's hut—I was the man who tried to prevent you going further up river."

"I'm hanged if I understand," Rob gasped. "Who are you, and why were you impersonating Kabala?"

"I'll tell you as quickly as I possibly can," the other said. "My name is John Wainwright and I'm a member of the Secret Service. Not so long ago we heard a rumour that the biggest uranium find yet had been secretly located somewhere here, and that uranium was already being smuggled out of the island."

"Uranium!" Rob gasped. "So that's the explanation!"

The other nodded.

"I was secretly flown out here some little time ago," John Wainwright went on. "I quickly

"Gosh! If this doesn't beat everything!" Rod gasped. For he'd suddenly found himself gazing into an unknown quarry, in which armed white men were forcing natives to work!

learned of the trouble in the Darra district, and realised that it must have something to do with the uranium find. As I've spent many years amongst the Dyaks it was easy for me to disguise myself as one. That was how I discovered that Kabala was missing from his tree hut."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I knew the Darra River must lead to the heart of the mystery," he said then, "but though I explored it time and time again I got no nearer to discovering anything about it. Finally I decided to disguise myself as Kabala and to take possession of his hut. I knew that sooner or later Kabala was bound to return to it, and then I intended to force a confession out of him."

"And it was I who turned up instead," Rob said.

"Exactly," the other nodded. "I didn't want you to go up river. I was afraid you might meet some Dyaks, and then they would learn there were two Kabalas. That would have been curtains for me, because Kabala would have come hurrying back with many men and I would have been liquidated very quickly."

He looked at Rob with friendly appreciation.

"But I'm glad now that you borrowed that necklace and defied me," he stated. "I saw you leave, and I raced to a place where I had a canoe

hidden. I followed after you, but I only came upon you just after you'd finished stringing up the real Kabala to his tree. It is because of you that I found the path that led me to this place. But tell me of your meeting with Kabala."

Quickly Rob explained all that had happened.

The Secret Service man frowned.

"But what are we to do now?" he mused. "The tackling of the two whites won't be too difficult a task. Our most difficult one will be to kill the Dyaks' fear of Kabala and the river demon. Somehow or other we've got to do that."

Rob looked at the limp rubber demon and suddenly he was chuckling.

"I've an idea it's going to be easy," he said confidently.

Quickly he explained. At the end John Wainwright was smiling too, and he placed an appreciative hand on Rob's shoulder.

"Then we'll go into action straight away," he said.

It was only a few minutes later that what appeared to be the figure of Kabala, complete with head-dress, appeared over the top of the crest.

Actually it was John Wainwright. He raised one arm in an urgent, beckoning gesture.

"White men!" he called. "Come quickly! Come quickly!"

The two unknown whites turned to look towards him and both started to run in his direction. When they were only a few yards away the figure with the grotesque head-dress turned and darted back over the crest and out of the sight of the working Dyaks.

At top speed the two white men also raced over the crest. They saw the fake Kabala waiting for them some little distance down the slope.

They both pulled up the moment they reached him. "Hey, what's wrong, Kabala?" one of them gasped.

Instead of replying, John Wainwright jerked the grotesque covering from his head.

For a moment then the two men stood as though turned to stone.

"The authorities must be wise to us!" one of them gasped then. "We——"

"Shoot, you fool!" the other snarled.

But that moment's hesitation had been their undoing. Like a bolt from the blue Rob came leaping from hiding. His terrific charge swept both men off their feet, and then Rob and the Secret Service agent went into action so quickly that the two white men were given no chance to raise the alarm.

When both were lying bound and gagged, Rob looked at John Wainwright and grinned.

"I'm going back to the river now," he declared. "The sooner we put our secret plan into operation the better. It won't take me long to get things fixed up, so you and the Dyaks can follow after me as soon as you like."

"Go ahead!" John Wainwright said. "I don't anticipate any difficulty with the Dyaks."

Some few minutes later John Wainwright, once again wearing the head-dress, appeared above the crest. Down to the centre of the quarry he walked, and then he raised his hands above his head.

"Come!" he called in their own tongue to the Dyaks. "Kabala would have speech with you."

Obediently they came to cluster round him.

"Kabala brings you good news," John Wainwright said then. "Your days of toil are over. Today you may return to your villages."

Immediately there was intense excitement. Shovels and spades were flung to the ground.

"It was because of the demon you were forced to work for the white men," the Secret Service man went on, "but now Kabala's power is greater than that of the demon. I take you with me now and, with your own eyes, you shall see Kabala destroy the demon for ever."

The Dyaks went wild with excitement.

John Wainwright turned upon his heels.

"Come!" he said.

Obediently they followed after him until he reached the bank of the river. Once again the tremendous authority of the witch doctor over the Dyaks was made apparent, for when the eyes of the demon glared from the opposite bank not a single Dyak turned to flee.

Yet each and every one of them looked petrified with fear.

Nobody saw Rob, well hidden amongst the bushes, pull upon a length of vine so that the blown up demon came into full view.

John Wainwright raised a throwing spear high above his head.

"Death to the Demon!" he shouted.

With that he hurled the spear full at the rubber contraption. There was a great gasp from the assembled natives as the spear sped through the air. Then—woomph! The dreaded spectre exploded with an ear-shattering explosion, and only a few limp lengths of rubber were left to drift away down river.

With their own eyes the Dyaks had seen the destruction of the demon they had feared so much!

They cheered and danced as though they would never stop.

And so it came about that the Dyaks returned to their homes and the plantations upon which they worked. The two white men and the real Kabala were sent to prison, and the Government lost no time in taking over the uranium quarry and starting work upon it.

Thanks to the courage of Rob Carmichael and John Wainwright, the mystery of the Demon of the Darra River had been solved for all time!

THE END

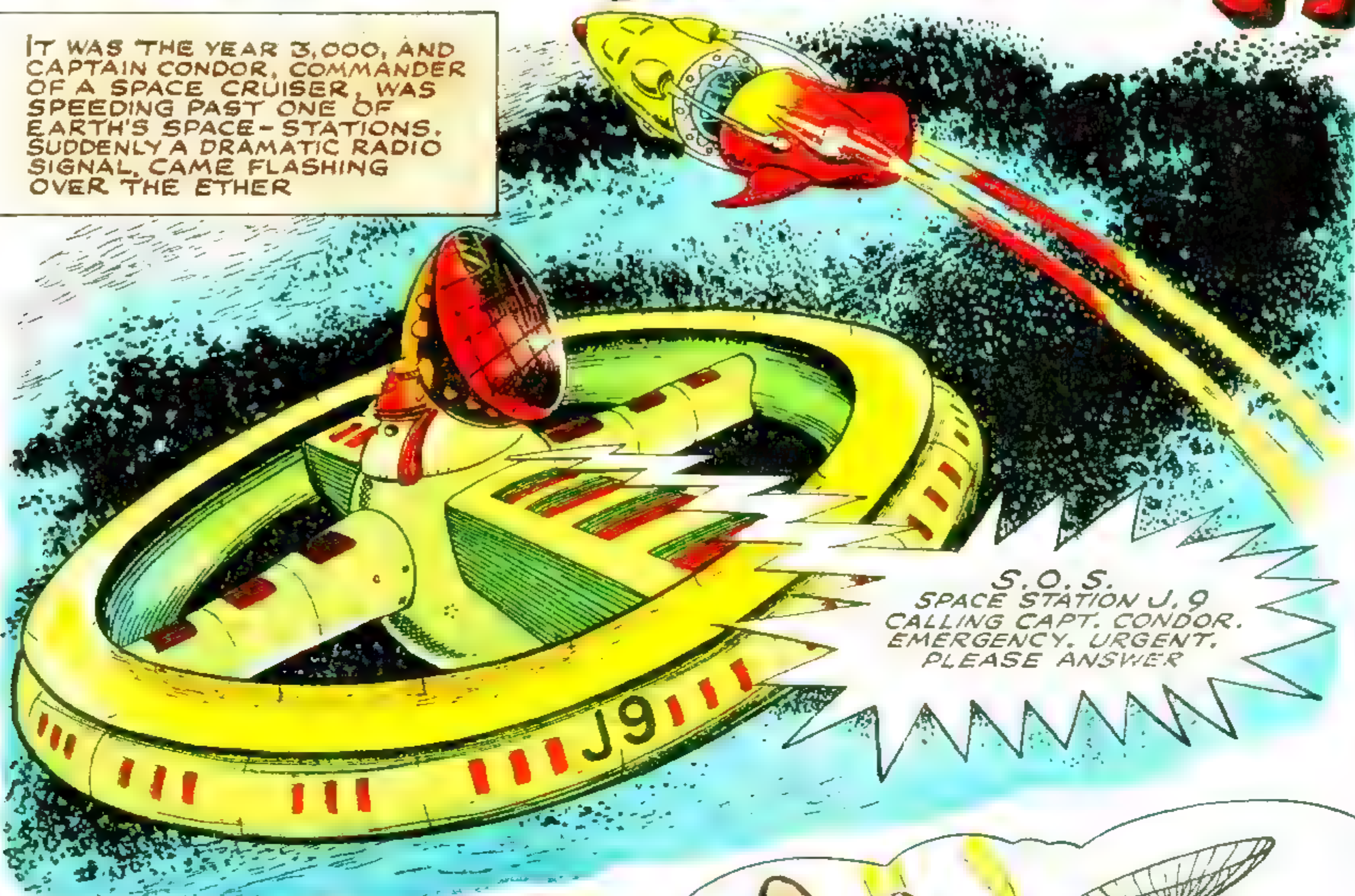
CAPTAIN CONDOR

AND

THE MENACE ON SPACE-STATION J9

By Frank S. Pepper

IT WAS THE YEAR 3,000, AND CAPTAIN CONDOR, COMMANDER OF A SPACE CRUISER, WAS SPEEDING PAST ONE OF EARTH'S SPACE-STATIONS. SUDDENLY A DRAMATIC RADIO SIGNAL, CAME FLASHING OVER THE ETHER



S.O.S.
SPACE STATION J. 9
CALLING CAPT. CONDOR.
EMERGENCY. URGENT.
PLEASE ANSWER

IN THE CONTROL ROOM OF HIS SHIP, CONDOR RECEIVED THE MESSAGE AND WHIPPED ROUND TO HIS PAL PETE

S.O.S. S.O.S.
J. 9 CALLING

HEAR THAT?
SOUNDS LIKE TROUBLE.
I'LL ASK FOR DETAILS



CONDOR
SPEAKING.
COME IN, J. 9

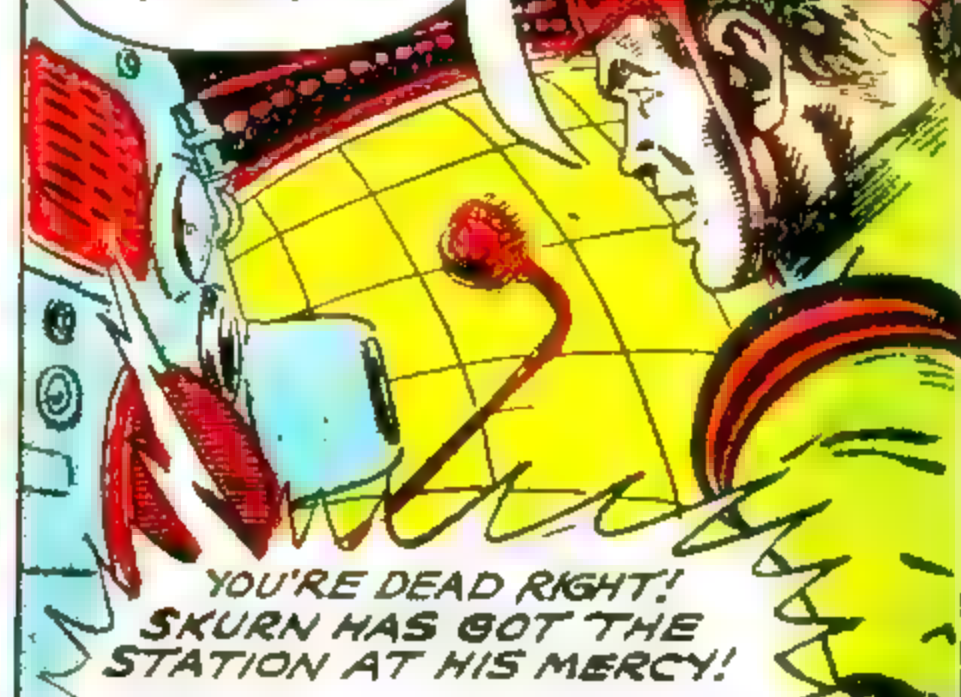
IT WAS THE SPACE-STATION
POLICE CHIEF WHO
REVEALED WHAT
WAS HAPPENING

VARGOL SKURN, A CONVICT
FROM VENUS, IS LOOTING OUR
STRONG-ROOM. HE HAS TURNED ON THE
ELECTRO-SCREEN WHICH NORMALLY
PROTECTS THE STRONG-ROOM
FROM THIEVES -



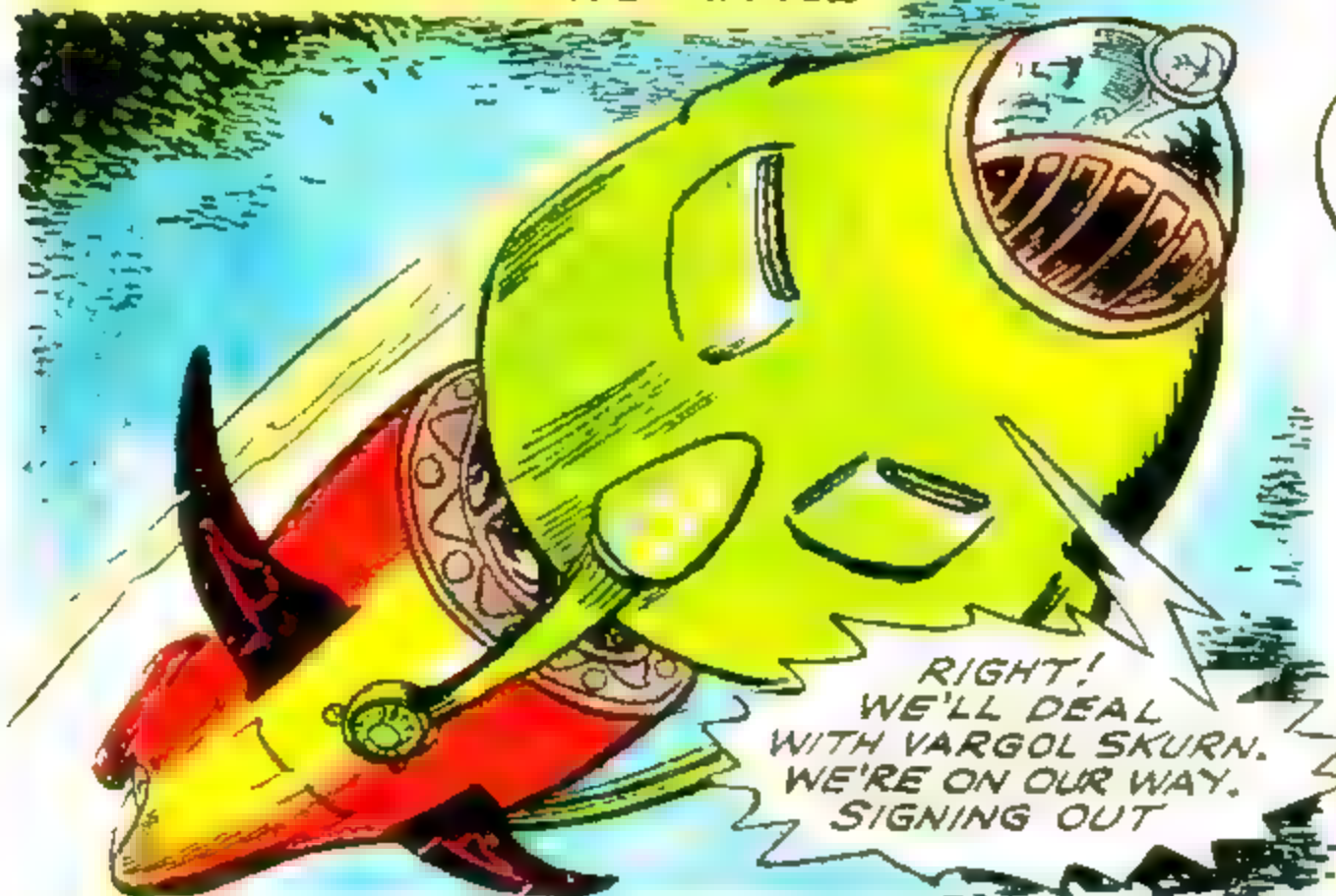
CONDOR GAVE A GASP

BY THUNDER!
THAT'S SERIOUS. IT
MEANS THAT NO ONE
CAN GET AT HIM,
DOESN'T IT? THE
SCREEN WOULD
ELECTROCUTE
ANYBODY WHO
TRIED!



YOU'RE DEAD RIGHT!
SKURN HAS GOT THE
STATION AT HIS MERCY!

WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION CONDOR
SENT OUT A CALM ASSURANCE



RIGHT!
WE'LL DEAL
WITH VARGOL SKURN.
WE'RE ON OUR WAY.
SIGNING OUT

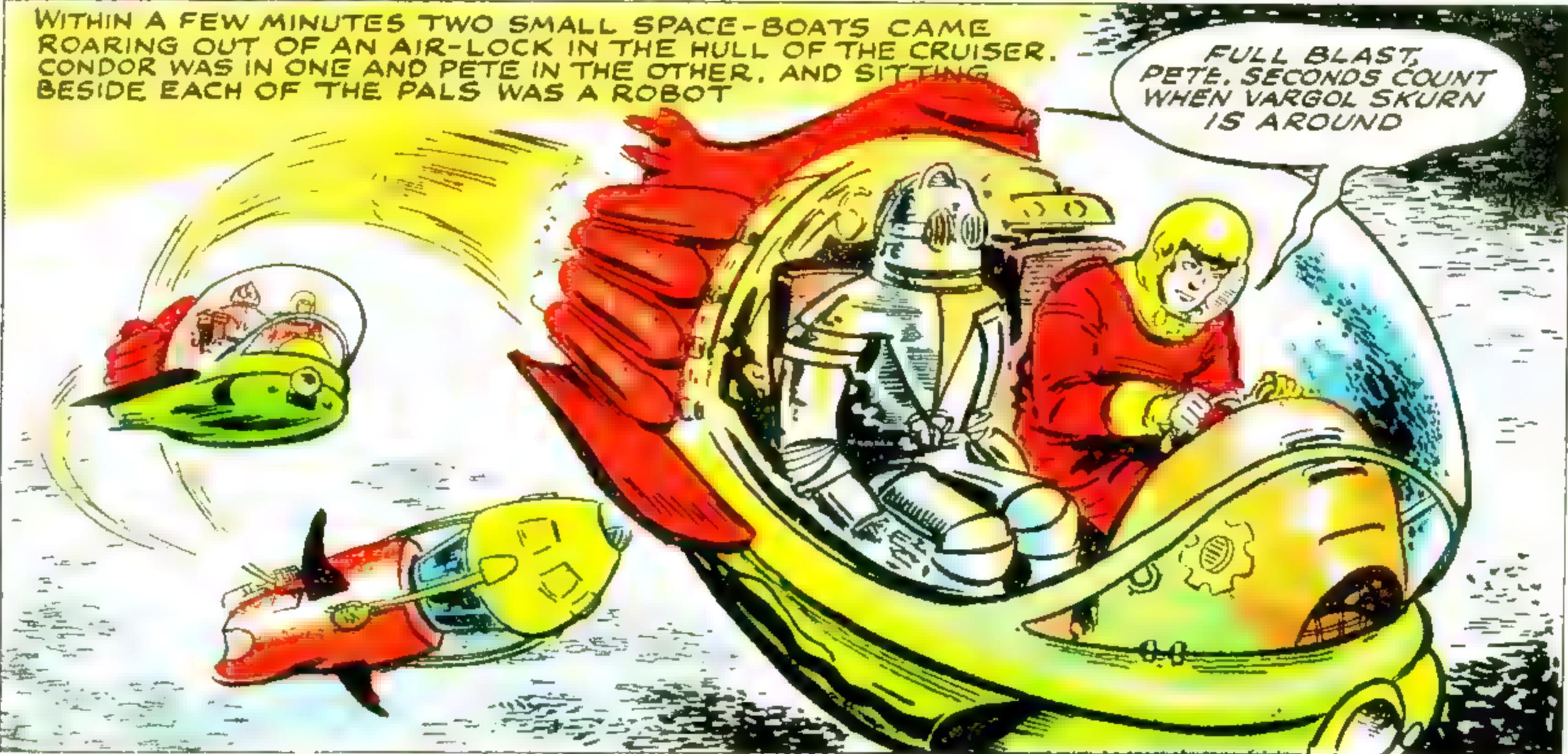
PETE STARED AT THE CAPTAIN IN
AMAZEMENT

FLAMING COMETS!
YOU'RE TACKLING A TOUGH
JOB THIS TIME, EVEN YOU
CAN'T PASS THROUGH
THAT SCREEN,
CAPTAIN



I KNOW I CAN'T.
BUT OUR ROBOTS CAN!
WE'LL TAKE A COUPLE
TO J. Q. -- AND THEN
SEE WHAT'S WHAT!

WITHIN A FEW MINUTES TWO SMALL SPACE-BOATS CAME
ROARING OUT OF AN AIR-LOCK IN THE HULL OF THE CRUISER.
CONDOR WAS IN ONE AND PETE IN THE OTHER, AND SITTING
BESIDE EACH OF THE PALS WAS A ROBOT



FULL BLAST,
PETE. SECONDS COUNT
WHEN VARGOL SKURN
IS AROUND

THE POLICE CHIEF ON J.9 GREETED CONDOR WITH UNDISGUISED RELIEF

THANK THE STARS YOU WERE WITHIN CALL, CAPTAIN. THIS PROBLEM HAS GOT ME BEATEN



CONDOR WAS LED TO THE SCENE OF THE TROUBLE

THERE IS THE ELECTRO-SCREEN. IT COMPLETELY ENCLOSES THE HUB OF THE STATION. THERE'S NO WAY OF GETTING THROUGH TO TURN IT OFF



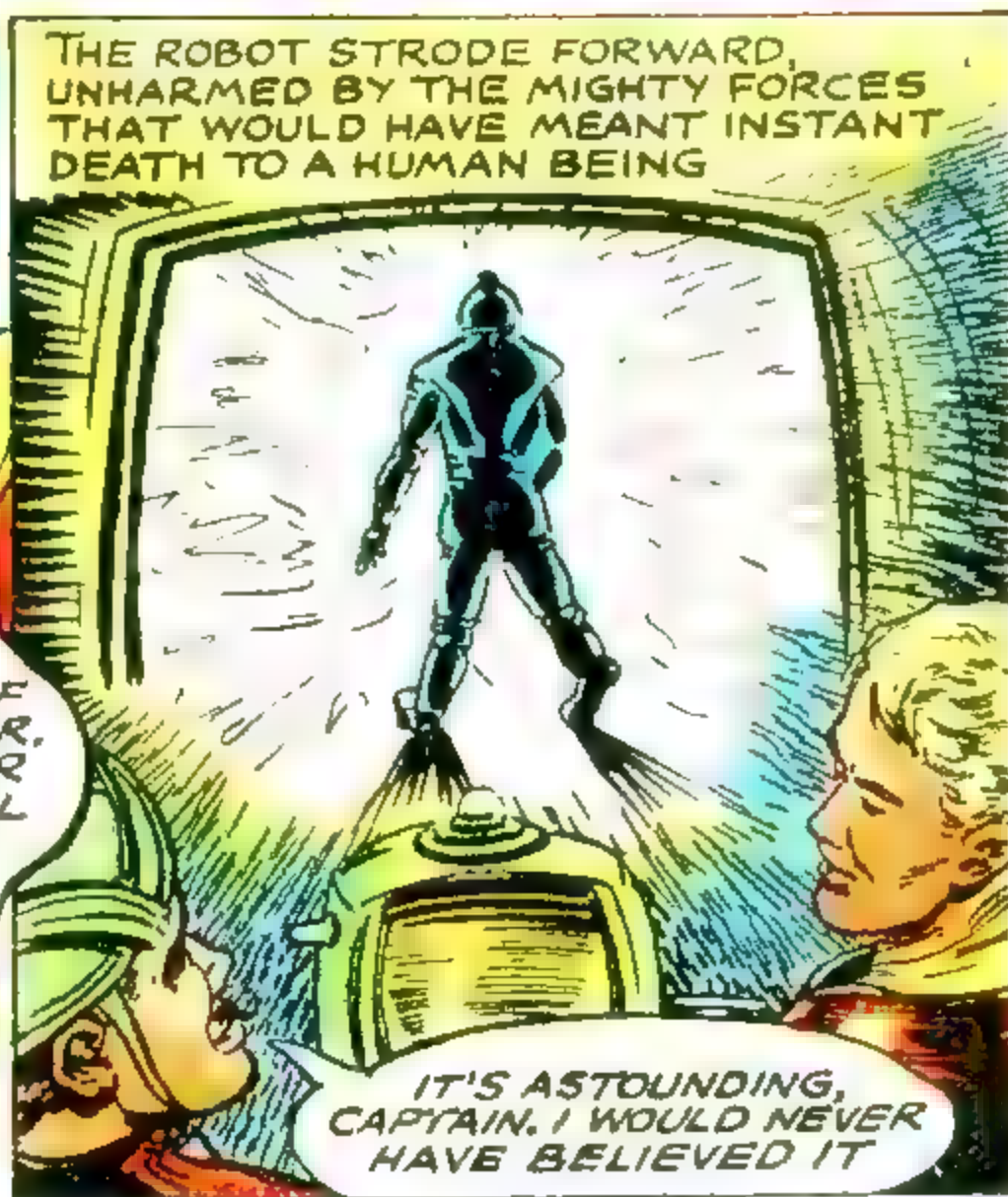
I THINK WE'LL FIND THAT MY No. 1 ROBOT IS A MATCH FOR SKURN. IT SHOULD BE QUITE UNAFFECTED BY THE SCREEN



NOW TO SEND THE ROBOT INTO ACTION BY MEANS OF THIS TRANSMITTER. THE TELE-VIEWER ATTACHMENT WILL ENABLE US TO WATCH ITS PROGRESS

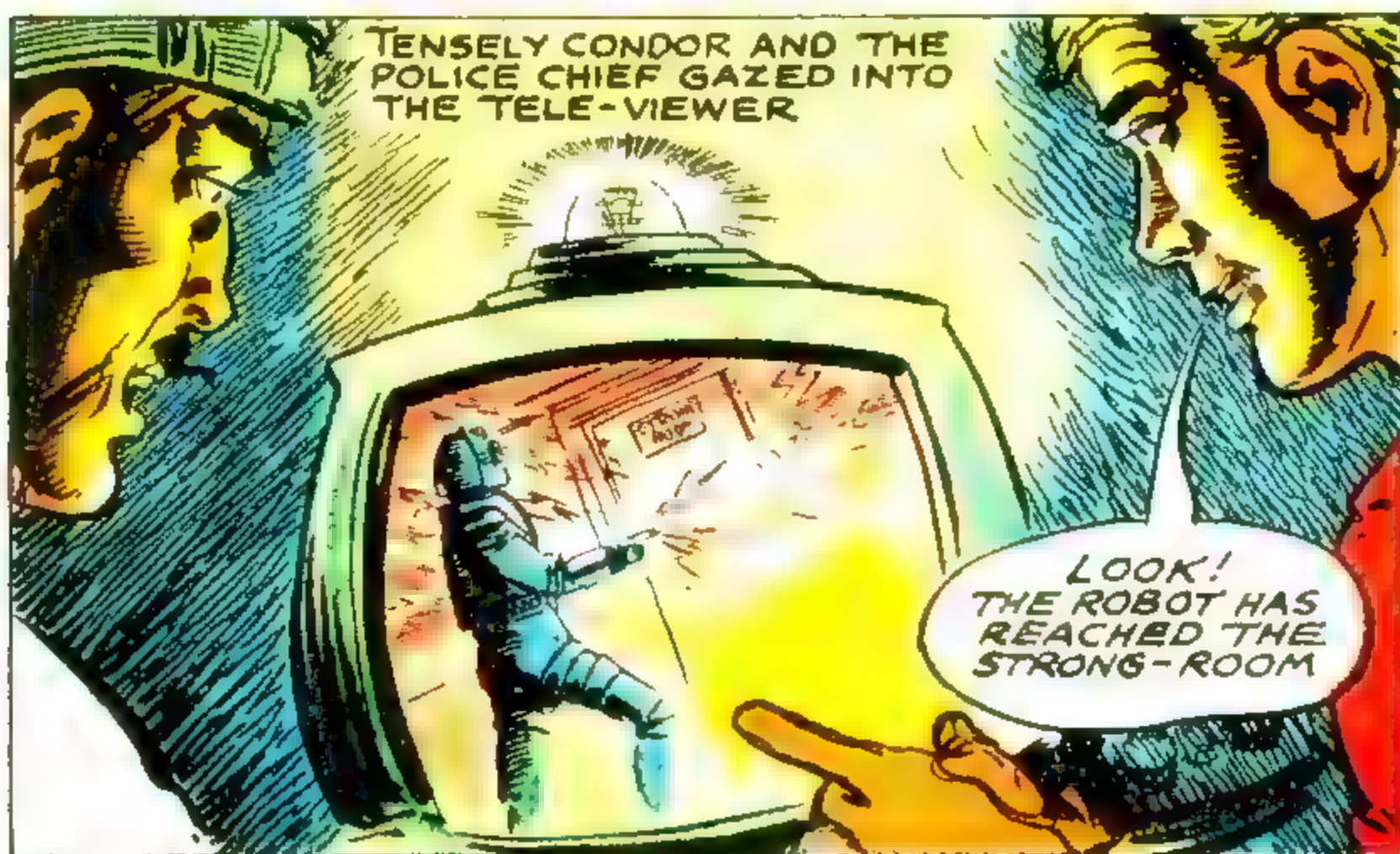


THE ROBOT STRODE FORWARD, UNHARMED BY THE MIGHTY FORCES THAT WOULD HAVE MEANT INSTANT DEATH TO A HUMAN BEING



IT'S ASTOUNDING, CAPTAIN. I WOULD NEVER HAVE BELIEVED IT

TENSELY CONDOR AND THE POLICE CHIEF GAZED INTO THE TELE-VIEWER

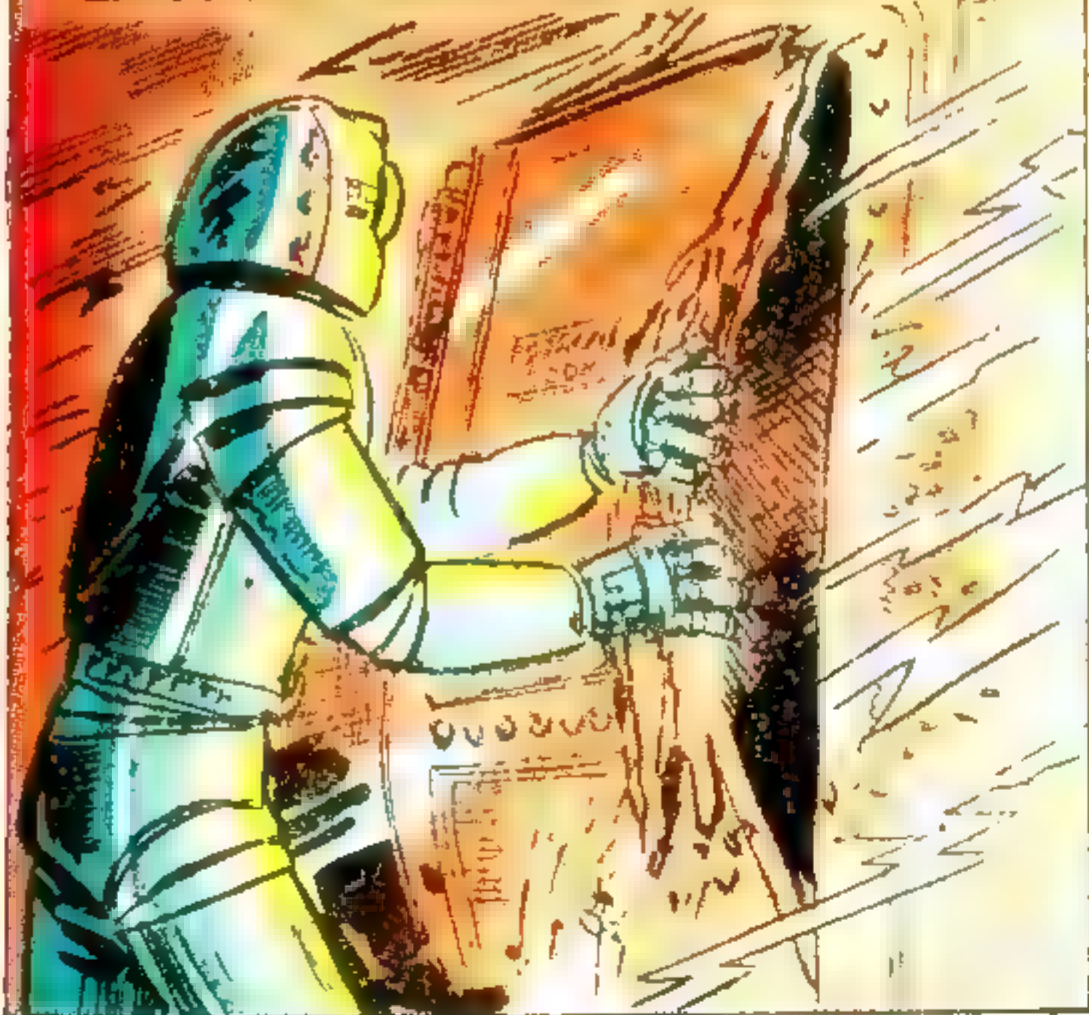


LOOK! THE ROBOT HAS REACHED THE STRONG-ROOM

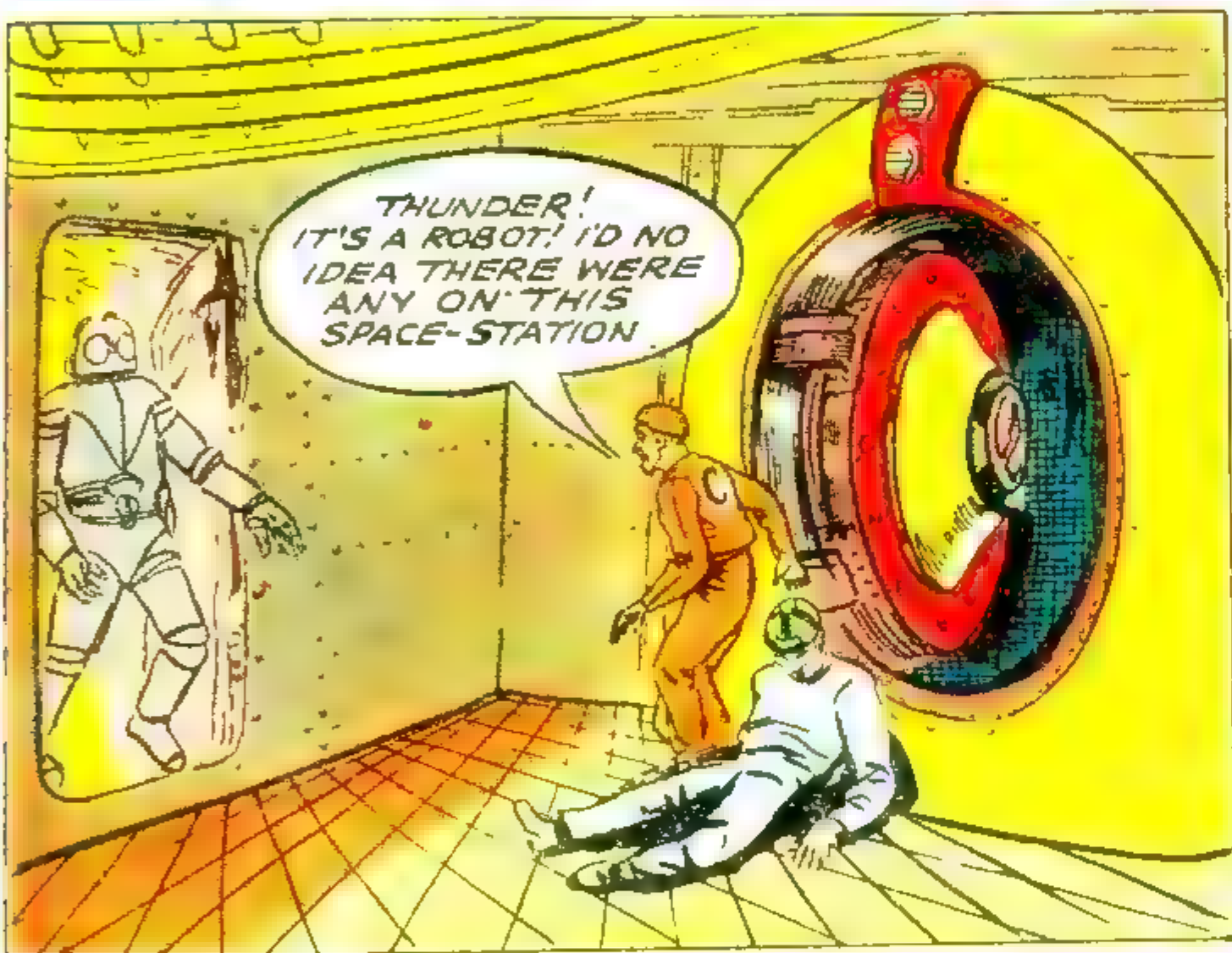
SIZZLING POWER FROM THE ROBOT'S FINGERS SWIFTLY CARVED A GASH IN THE MASSIVE DOOR



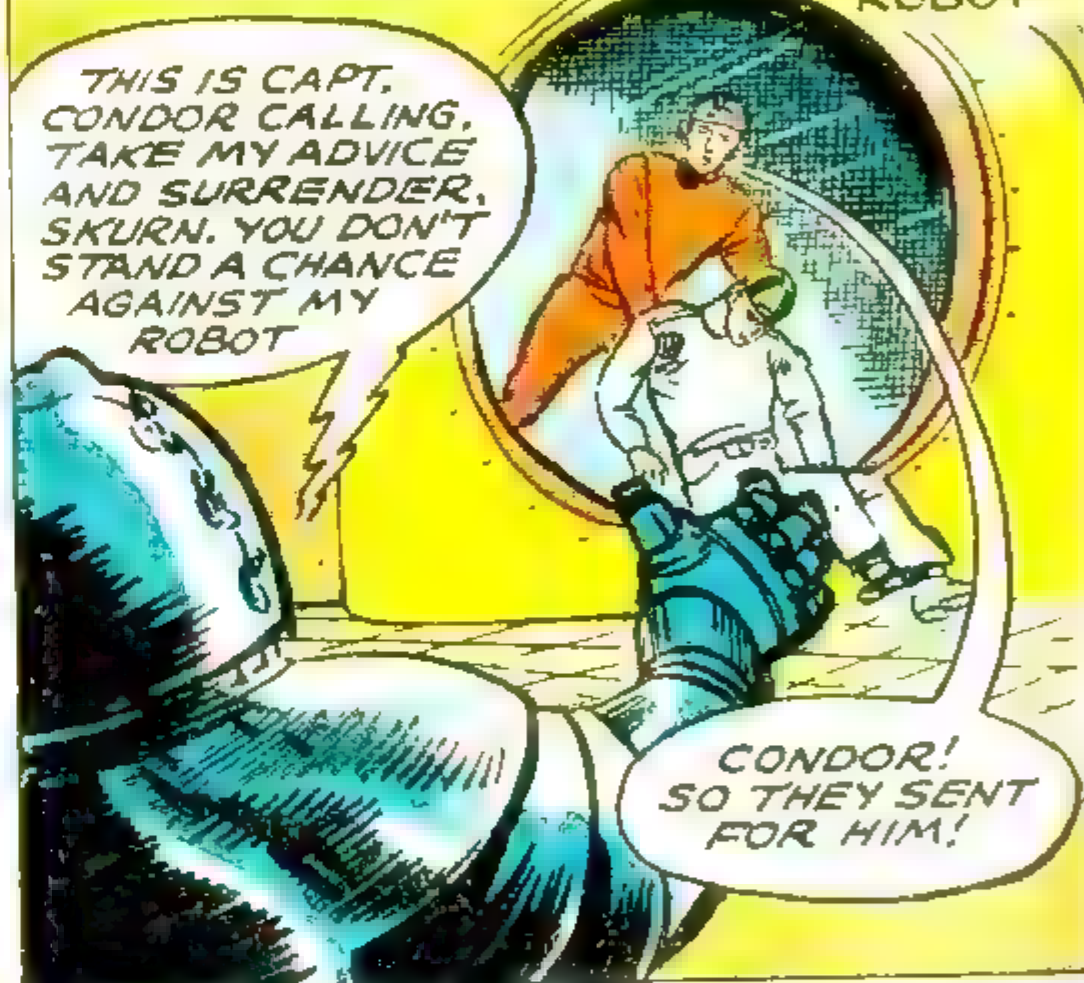
DIRECTED BY CONDOR'S TRANSMITTER, THE ROBOT RELENTLESSLY BEGAN TO TEAR AWAY THE STEEL PANELS



WITHIN THE STRONG-ROOM, CROUCHING BESIDE THE GUARD WHOM HE HAD KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS, VARGOL SKURN UTTERED A STRANGLED CRY



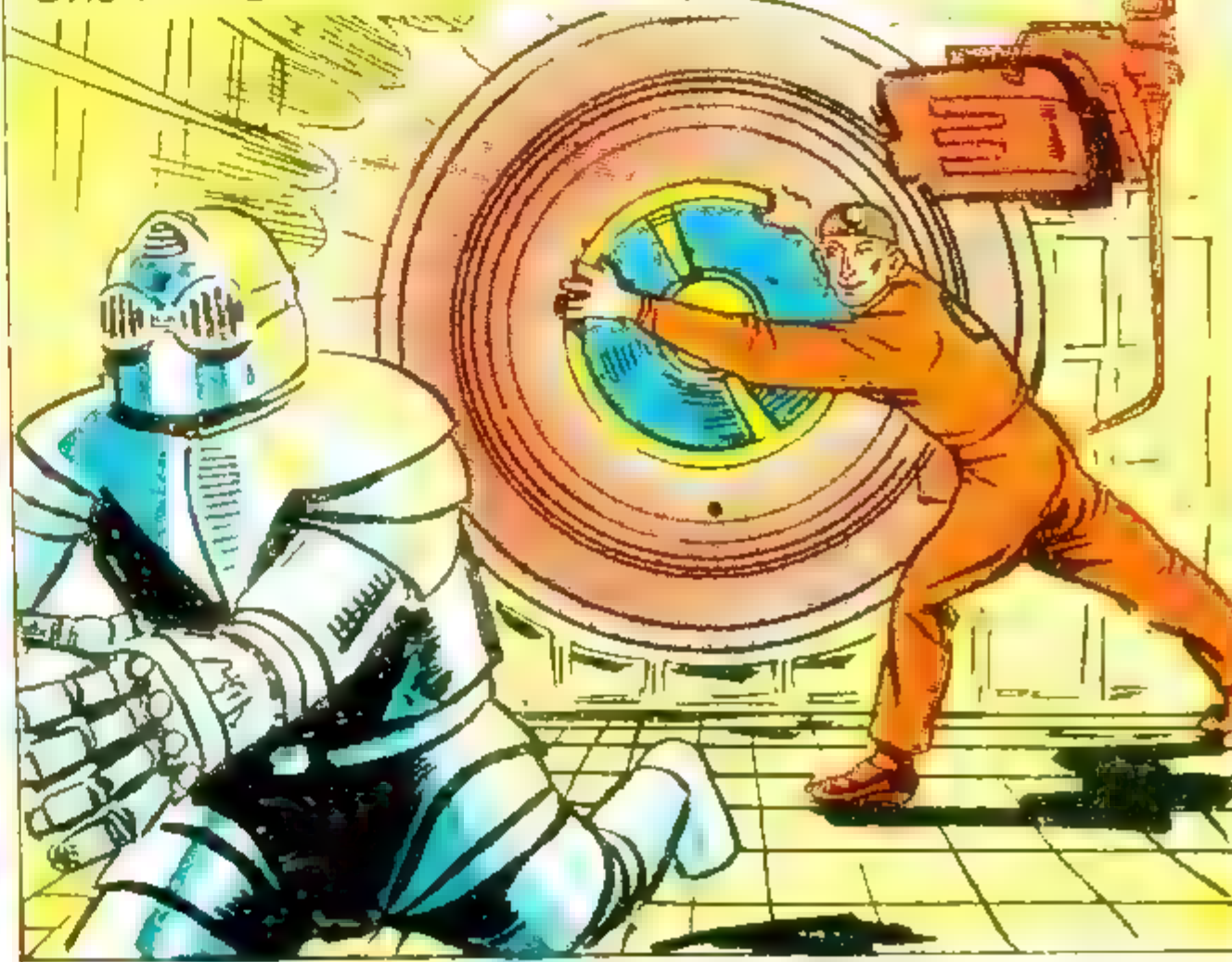
AT THAT MOMENT A STERN VOICE CAME THROUGH A LOUD SPEAKER INSIDE THE ROBOT



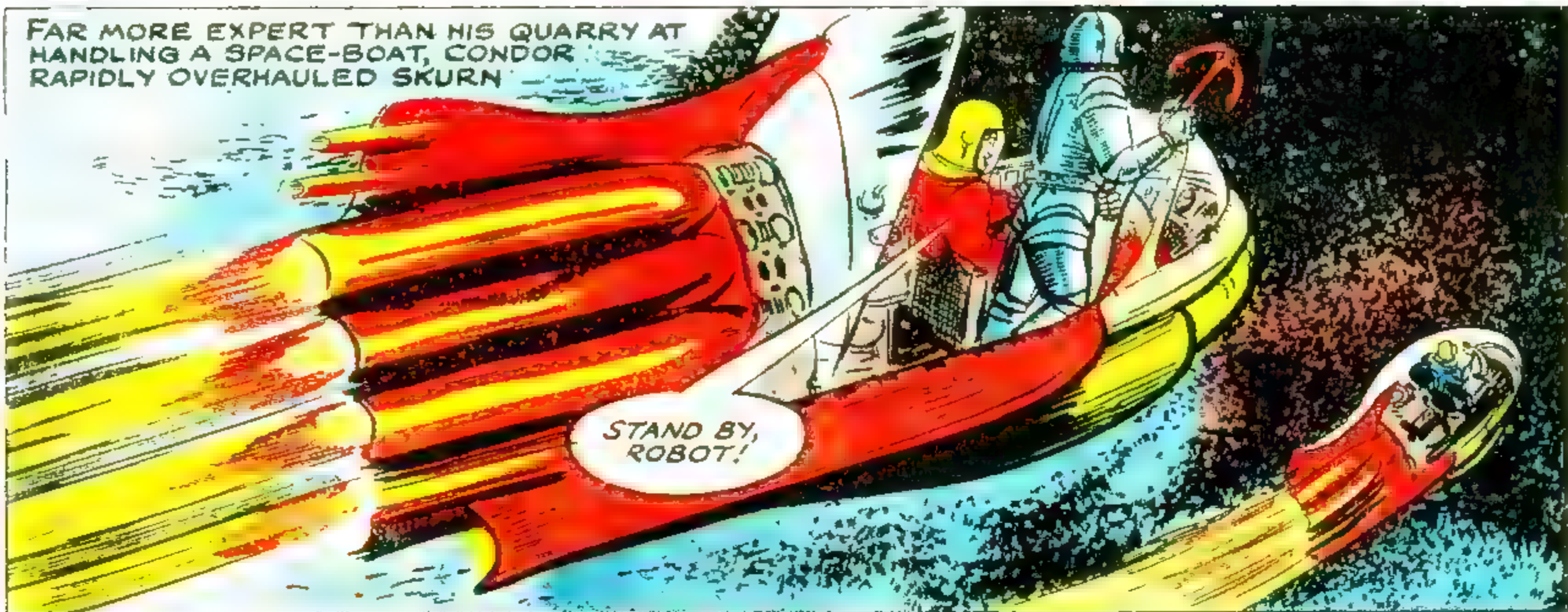
THE CROOK DREW BACK INTO THE SAFE, DRAGGING THE UNCONSCIOUS GUARD WITH HIM



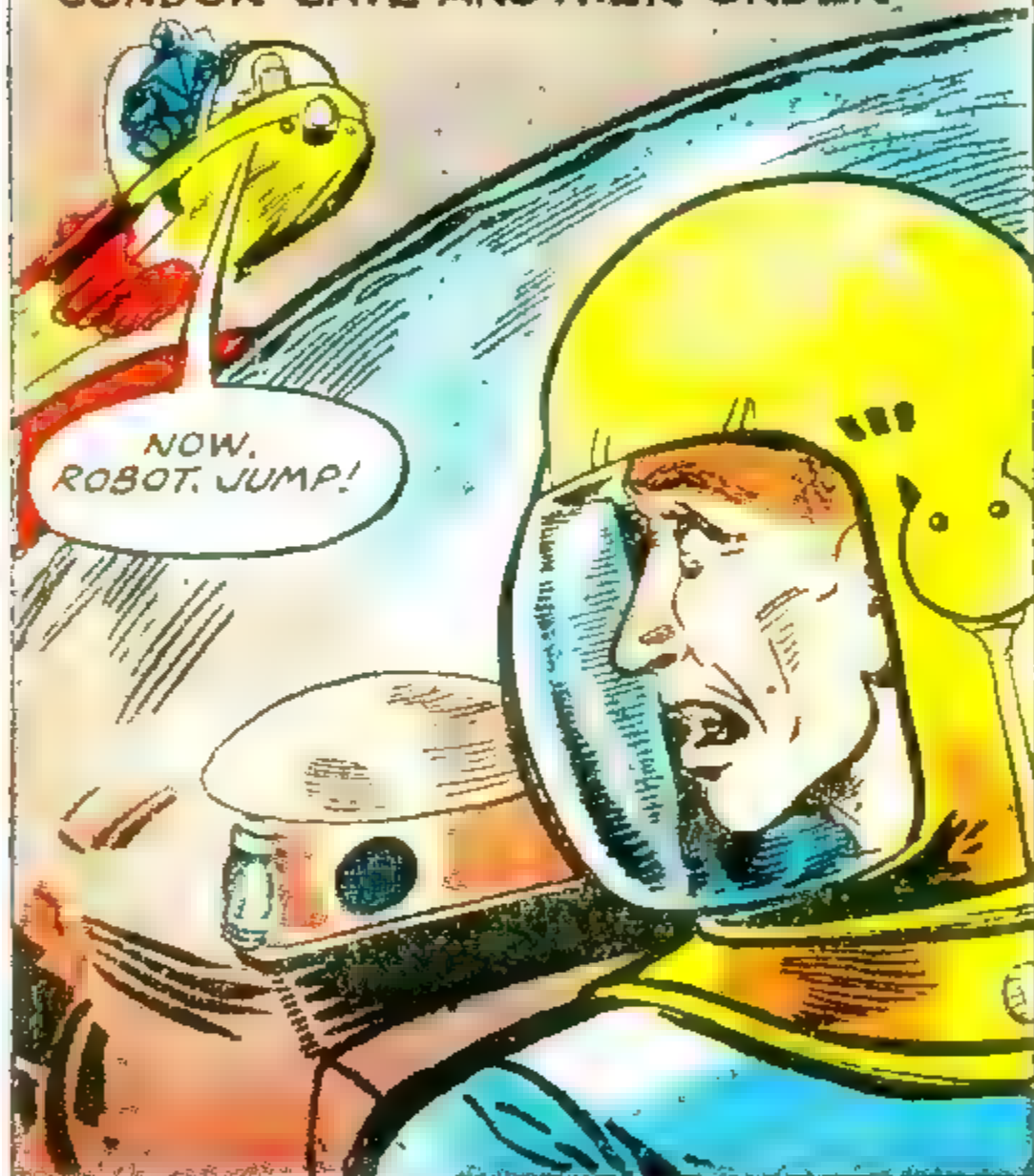
THE ROBOT FOLLOWED. INSTANTLY SKURN SLAMMED THE DOOR OF THE SAFE, SHUTTING THEM INSIDE IT



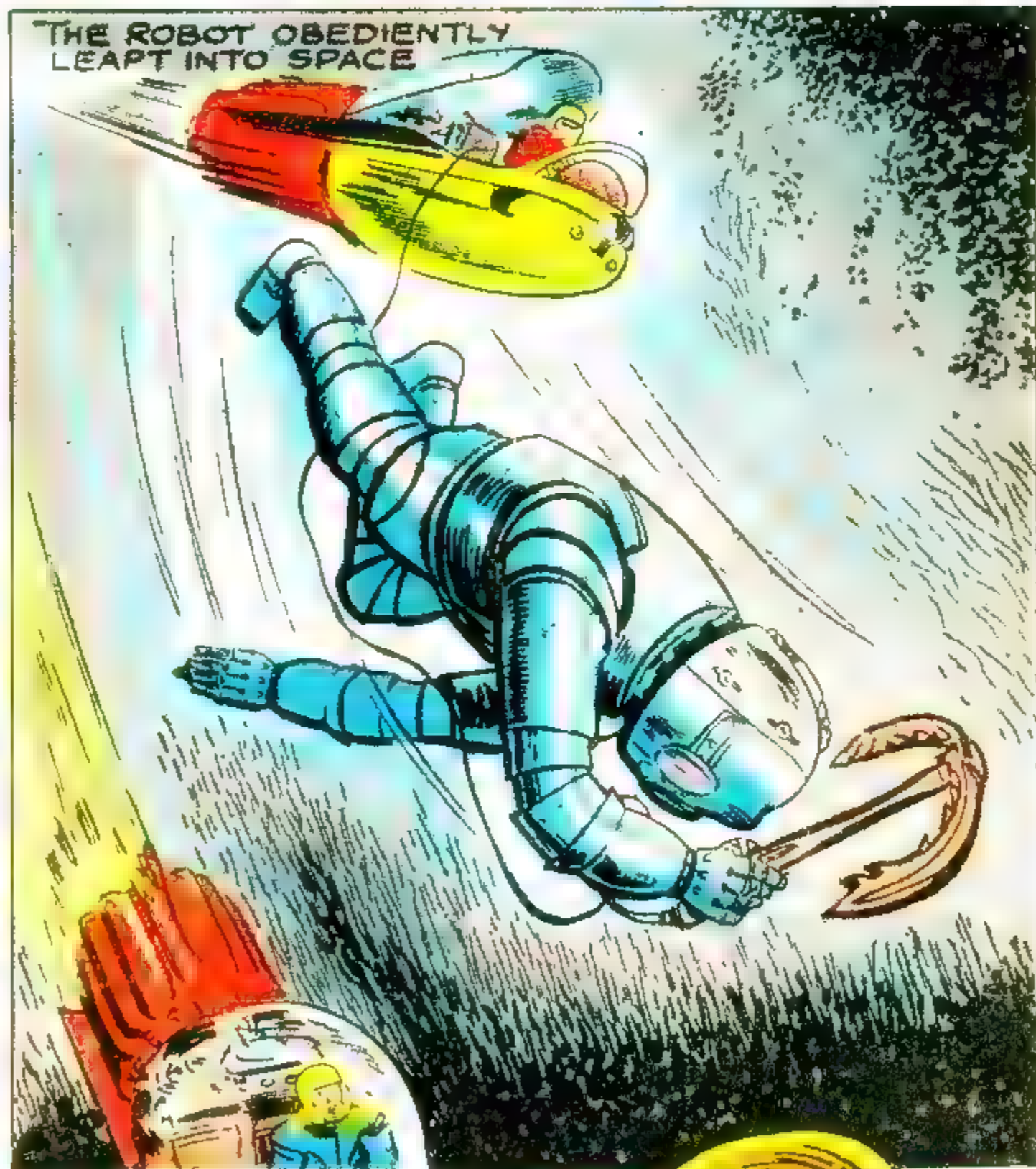
FAR MORE EXPERT THAN HIS QUARRY AT HANDLING A SPACE-BOAT, CONDOR RAPIDLY OVERHAULED SKURN



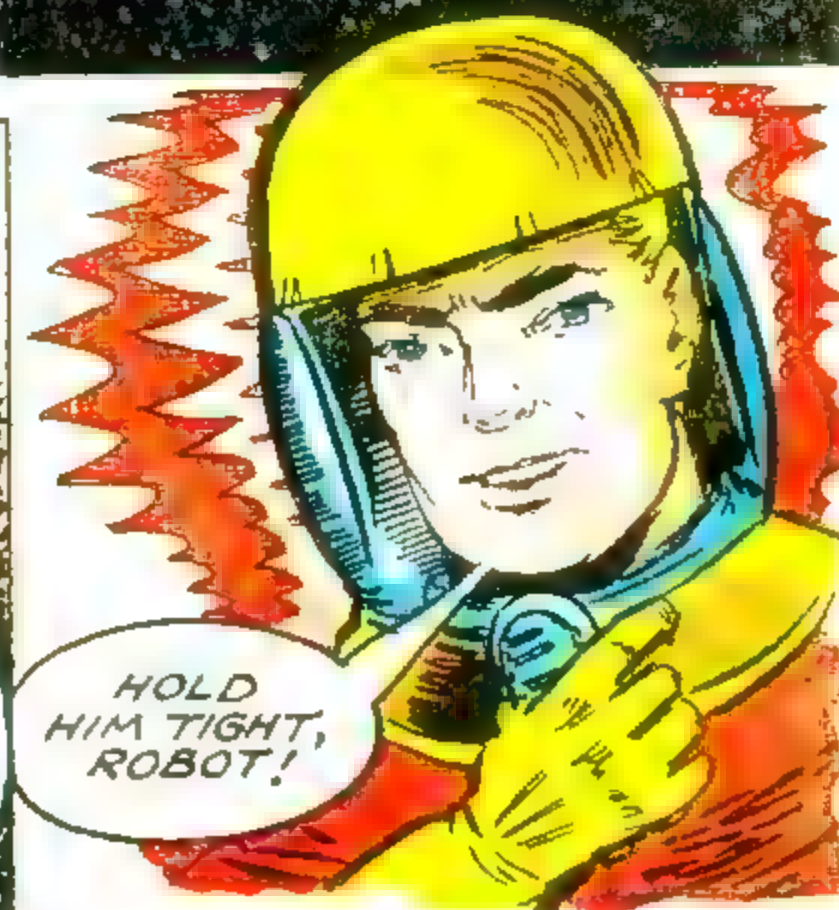
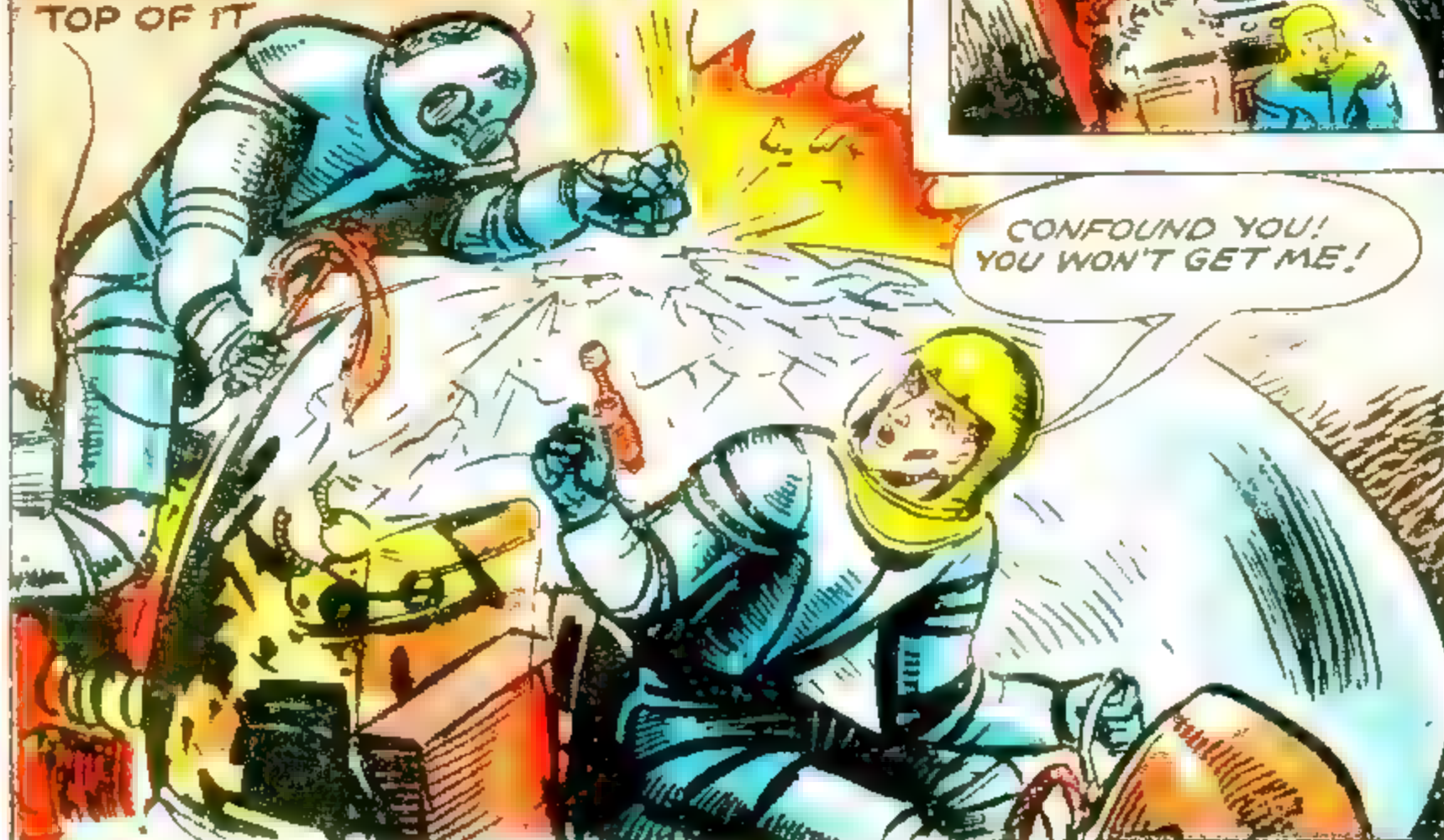
SKURN LOOKED BACK IN ALARM AS GONDOR GAVE ANOTHER ORDER



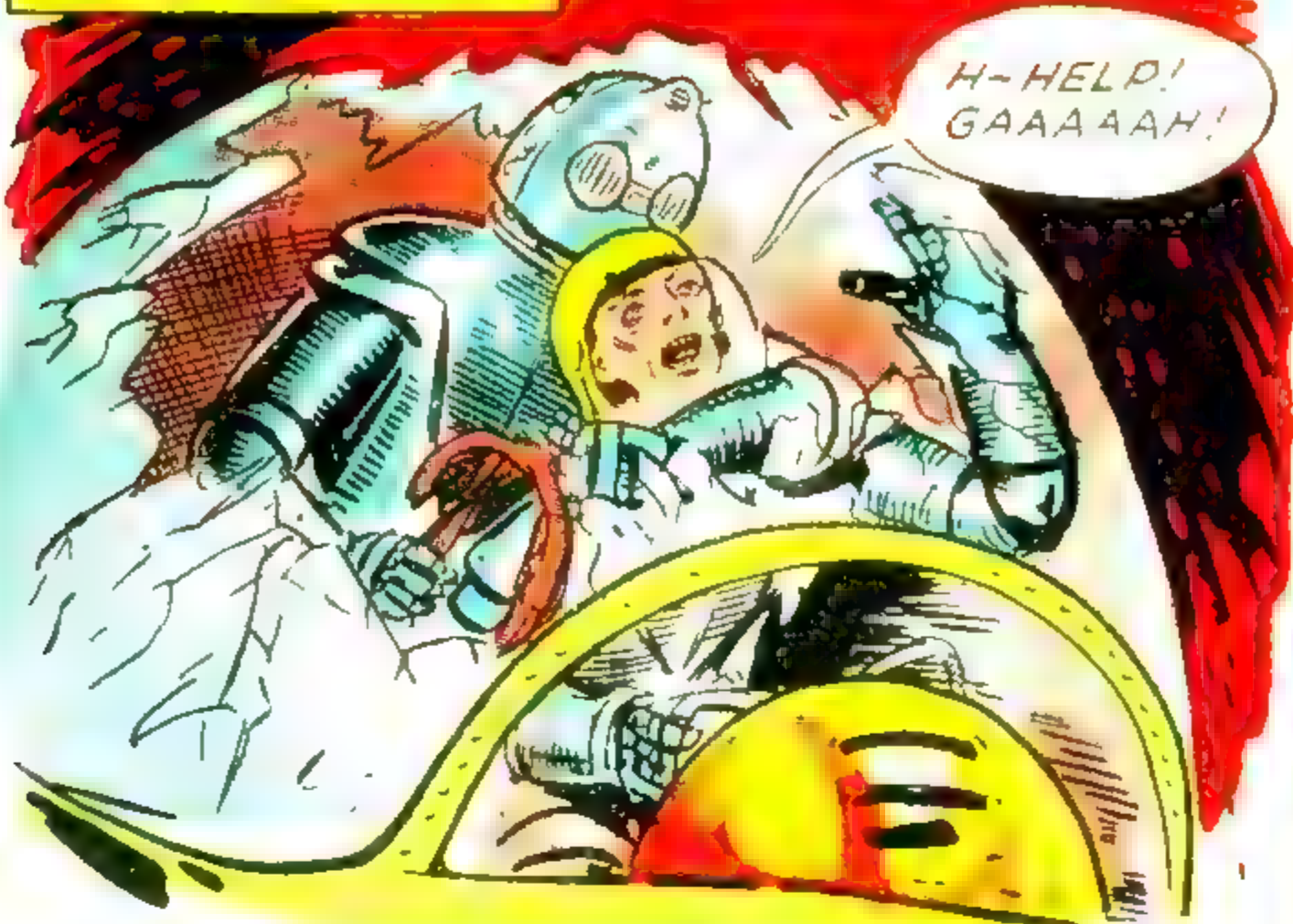
THE ROBOT OBEDIENTLY LEAPT INTO SPACE



LANDING ON THE OTHER SPACE-BOAT, THE ROBOT SMASHED A HOLE IN THE TOP OF IT



WITHIN A FEW SECONDS THE CROOK HAD BEEN PUT OUT OF ACTION



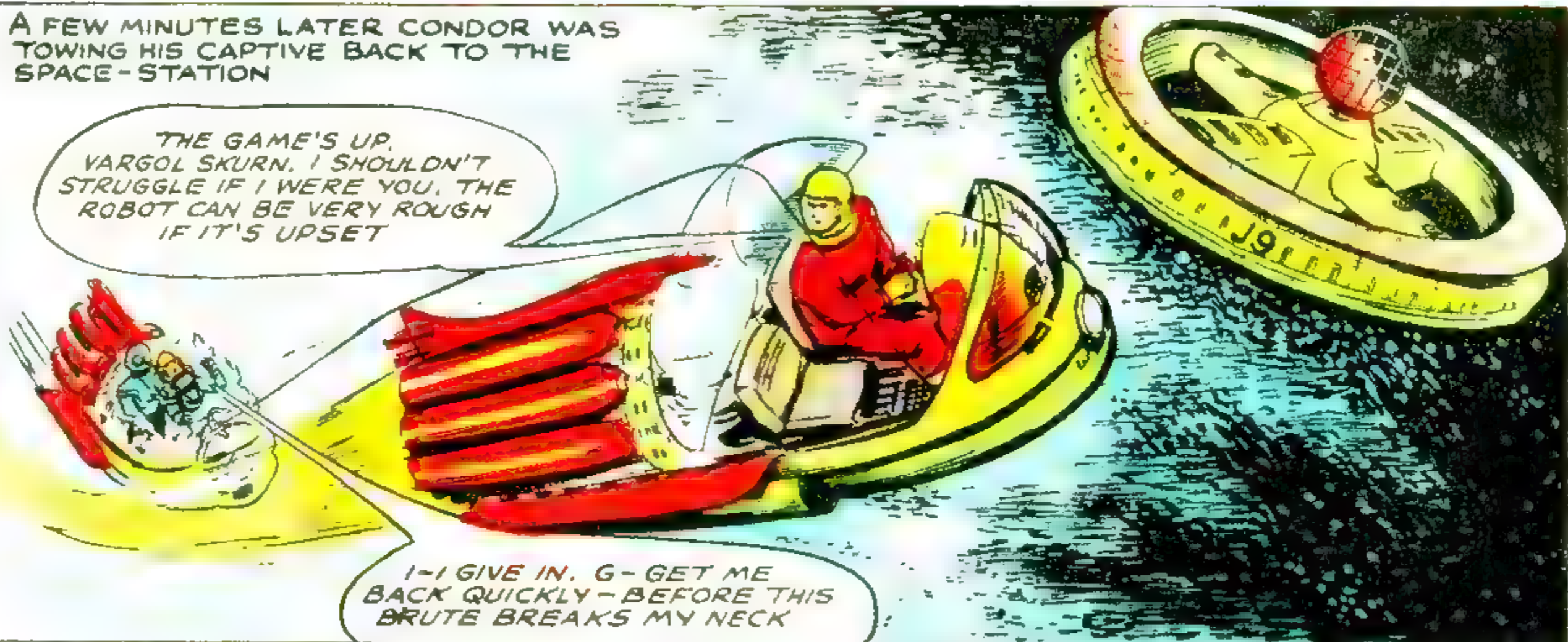
H-HELP!
GAAAAAH!

NICE WORK,
ROBOT. NOW MAKE
THE GRAPNEL
SECURE



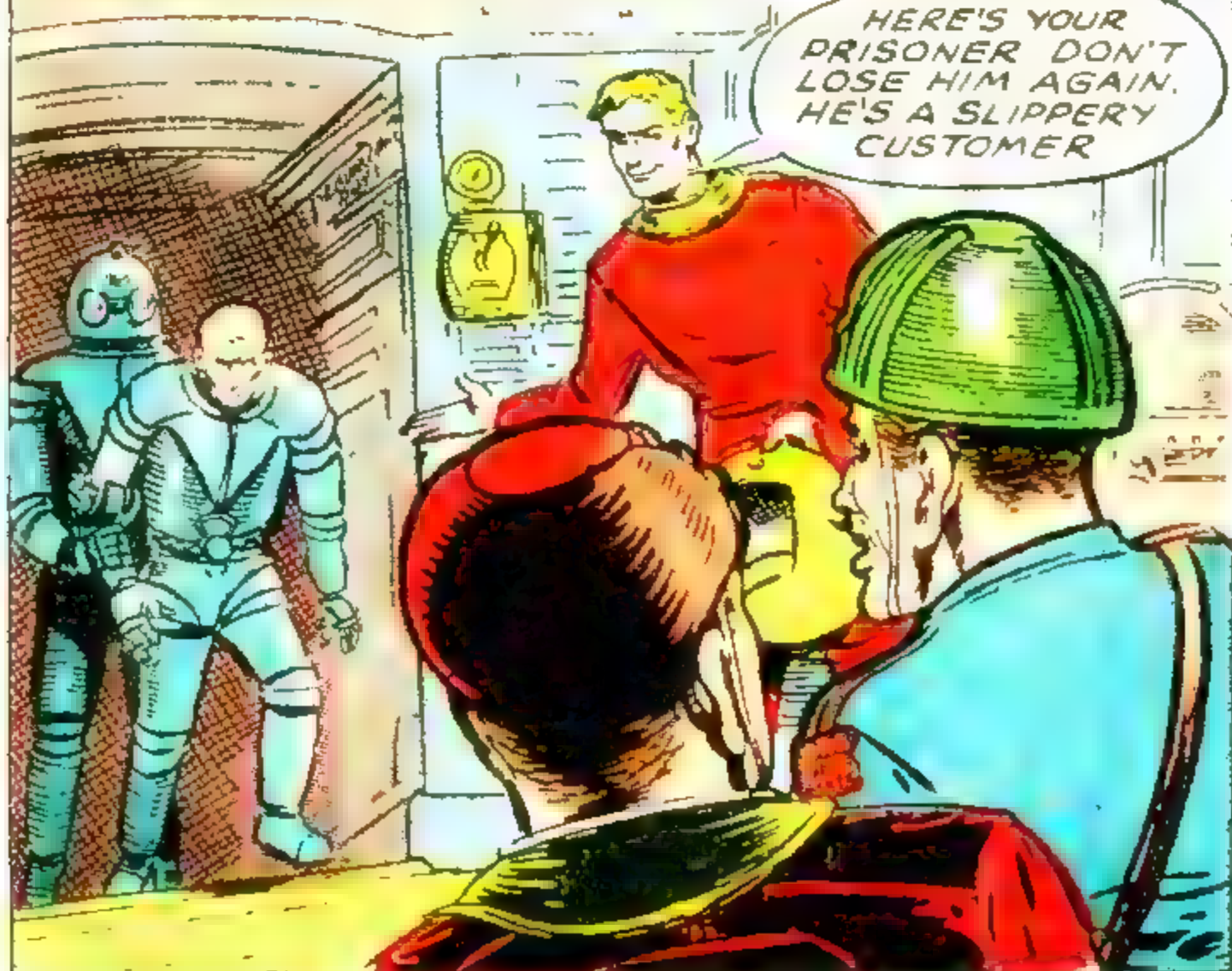
A FEW MINUTES LATER CONDOR WAS
TOWING HIS CAPTIVE BACK TO THE
SPACE-STATION

THE GAME'S UP,
VARGOL SKURN. I SHOULDN'T
STRUGGLE IF I WERE YOU. THE
ROBOT CAN BE VERY ROUGH
IF IT'S UPSET



I-I GIVE IN. G-GET ME
BACK QUICKLY-BEFORE THIS
BRUTE BREAKS MY NECK

AND WHEN THEY REACHED THE SPACE-STATION,
THE POLICE CHIEF WAS WAITING WITH PETE.
CONDOR SMILED TRIUMPHANTLY



HERE'S YOUR
PRISONER DON'T
LOSE HIM AGAIN.
HE'S A SLIPPERY
CUSTOMER

YOU NEEDN'T WORRY! HIS
PLAN BACKFIRED, THANKS TO
YOU, CAPTAIN CONDOR. FROM
NOW ON WE'LL TAKE GOOD
CARE OF HIM

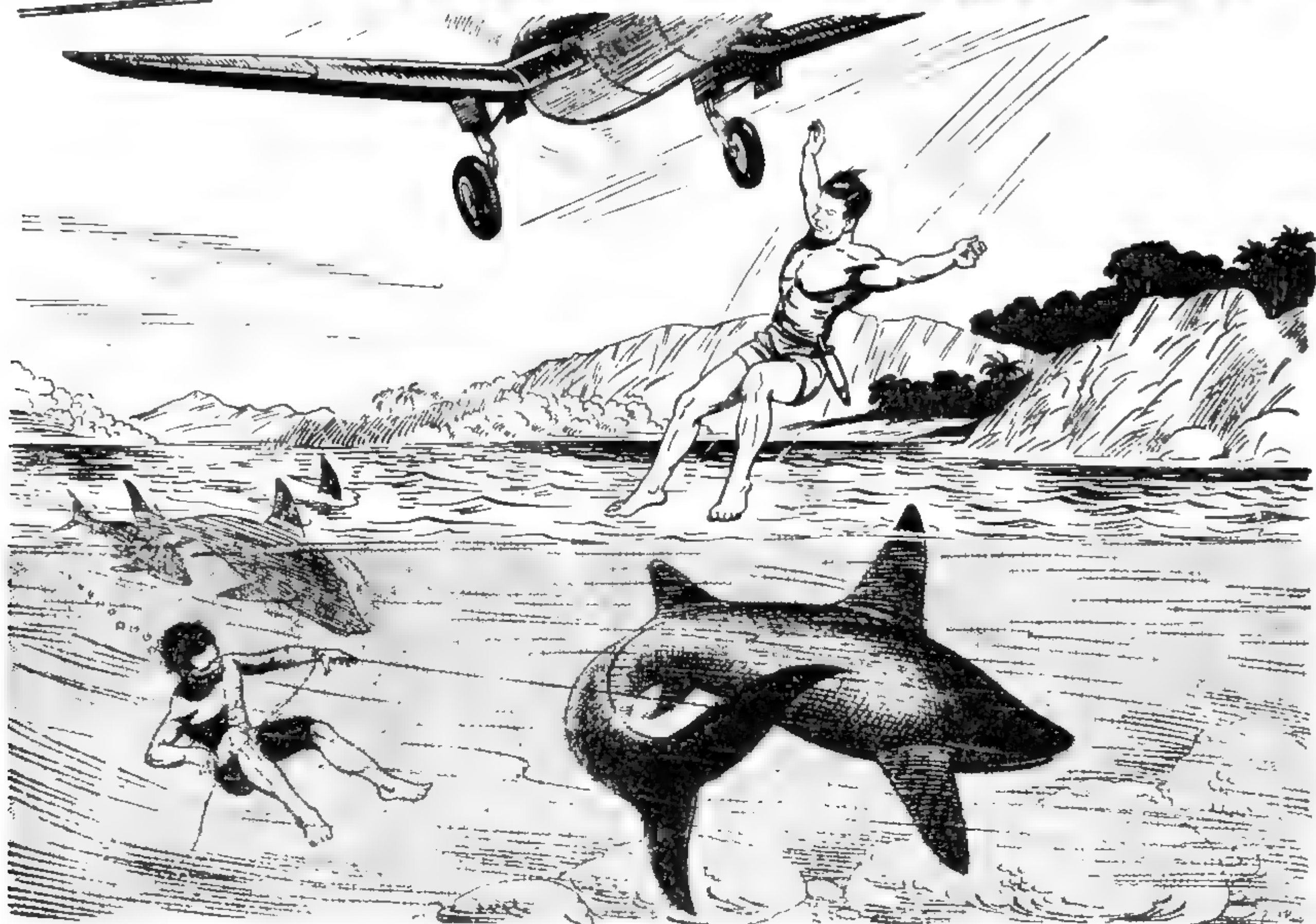


DON'T THANK
ME-THANK MY
ROBOTS!

THE END.

DIVER DICK
SOLVES

The RIDDLE OF THE SUNKEN SHIP



SAVED FROM THE SHARKS

DICK DANVER looked down with considerable interest from the cabin of the small plane that was taking him to Kaiwiki, an island in the South Pacific. The island and the coral-fringed lagoon could be plainly seen.

"I'll take you down lower," the pilot volunteered. "That will give you a chance to see the wreck and just how it blocks the channel."

The young diver had been sent for urgently by the Kaiwiki harbour officials. A little while earlier a ship had been holed when coming through the channel on the reef. She had sunk, completely blocking the channel so that no ship could pass in or out. It was a disaster for the people of Kaiwiki, for their banana harvest was just ripening.

Two big ships lay at the dock, loading. If they could not get out in time, the fruit would spoil, and the islanders would face ruin. Dick's task was to advise upon how the wreck could be cleared.

As the plane swooped low over the reef, Dick could see the shape of the wreck plainly.

By Peter Glassford

"It's not going to be an easy job," he murmured. "Blowing her up is liable to blow in the sides of the channel, and close it even tighter."

Suddenly his hand clutched the pilot's shoulder.

"Swing round to port," he asked.

As the pilot obeyed, the plane roared over the figure of a brown-skinned Kaiwiki boy who was fishing from a small canoe. He had just hooked a big fish and was standing up in the slender boat, trying to haul in the fish. But he could not see what Dick, from the height of the plane, could see clearly.

Following the fish which the boy had hooked were four big sharks. They were swimming upward to the surface. As the plane circled lower, the very thing Dick feared suddenly happened.

One of the sharks plunged for the hooked fish and seized it in gaping jaws. Then it started to dive, and the boy's line tightened with a jerk. The boy had been prepared for a pull against a big fish, but not from one as big as a shark!

Amazing Underwater Adventures on the Sea-Bed of Unknown Peril!

Dick saw him fight the line and struggle for his balance at the same time.

The canoe rolled, and suddenly the boy was in the water. In a split second the line had caught around his wrist, and he was being dragged beneath the surface. And the other three sharks were swimming up towards him!

"Go down!" Dick yelled to the pilot. "Take her as low as you can over that canoe."

He started to throw off his shirt as the pilot obeyed instructions. But, when the young diver swung open the plane door, the pilot realised what he was going to do.

"Hey!" he shouted. "You'll be killed!"

But he was too late. Dick had already jumped!

He judged his fall so that he hit the surface at an angle, feet first. His body was rigid to meet the shock, but even so his knees were driven up until they almost hit his chin.

Down through the clear green water his speed drove him. As he went he snatched out the big sheath knife which he always carried on his belt.

His speed slowed, and he could see to one side of him the figure of the boy being dragged down by his own fishing line.

With two powerful strokes Dick cut through the water to the boy. His knife slashed. The line parted. Dick saw the boy nod his thanks. Then suddenly the boy's eyes widened and he started to kick out furiously, pointing upward as he did so.

Dick sensed a stir in the water behind him. He realised the sharks were swinging in toward him.

With an upward sweep of his arms, he drove himself down a few feet.

Over his head, so close that the rough skin rasped his upstretched arms, swept one of the sharks. Dick's legs kicked out hard, driving him after the monster—it was just turning as he reached it.

His knife jabbed up! The keen point found its mark in the one vital spot, just behind the shark's brain. The fight went from the great grey body.

Whoosh!

The other shark swept by; close behind it was the boy, swimming at a pace that even in that emergency impressed itself on Dick. As he watched, the boy caught hold of the shark's tail. Fearlessly he drew himself on to its back, clinging to its fins.

Knife at the ready Dick cut across the shark's course. It saw him and turned towards him.

Dick was prepared. With all his strength he struck out. The knife sank home. There was a wild flurry of movement, then the shark grew still.

Dick and the boy struck out for the surface. Breathlessly they heaved themselves into the drifting canoe. A broad grin split the boy's brown face.

"You save Tiki," he said. "Tiki thank you."

They paddled ashore, to find a tall Kaiwiki

native, dressed in smart European clothes, waiting for them.

"That Roko, Tiki's rich uncle," said the boy glumly. "Roko not pleased."

Tiki's words were an understatement. Roko seemed furious. As soon as the canoe's bows grated on the sandy beach, he grabbed the boy angrily and started to lash out at him with his fists.

"What are you playing at?" he demanded. "I send you to catch fish for my dinner. Instead you go swimming in lagoon. All the time you play."

Angered by the man's savage attack, Dick stepped forward.

"That'll be enough of that!" he snapped, and grabbed Roko's arm. "Leave the boy alone."

Roko snatched his arm free.

"You mind own business," he rapped.

His arm swung in another blow at the boy, but it did not land. Dick had blocked it with his own arm.

Roko released his grip on Tiki and turned towards Dick. With an angry roar he rushed at him, arms flailing. He was a powerful man, and one blow might have been enough to finish the fight. But Dick did not let a blow land.

Ducking and weaving, he backed away a couple of paces until he saw an opening.

Then his right fist swung up with all his strength behind it. The punch landed square on Roko's jaw, sending the big man sprawling to the ground. Tiki gave a chuckle of delight.

"Maybe that'll teach you to leave the boy alone," Dick snapped, as Roko rose slowly, brushing the sand from his elegant suit.

The native did not answer him. Instead he turned to Tiki.

"Long time I keep you," he snapped. "I feed, I house, I give clothes. Now you go with stranger. All right. Stranger take you, he keep you."

He stalked away.

Tiki grinned, and turned to Dick.

"Now you my master."

"Hey, steady on," Dick gasped. "I can't keep you. I'm a diver—I go about all over the world on diving jobs."

But even as he spoke, he remembered what a wonderful swimmer the boy was. He would make a great diver, with training.

"I come with you," Tiki said.

Before Dick could answer, a group of Kaiwiki officials came running down the beach. Unlike Roko, they had seen Dick's daring dive from the plane. But they wasted little time in congratulations. They were too anxious to lead him to the harbour office; here he studied plans and charts.

"It is most important to clear the channel quickly," the harbour master explained. "Already the fruit is almost too ripe to ship. Another day or

two and it will be too late. Kaiwiki will be ruined. The banana planters will have to sell up."

Dick nodded.

"I'll make my first dive in half an hour," he said. "When I've had a look at the wreck I'll have a better idea of what's involved."

A launch was waiting for Dick at the jetty. His gear had already been loaded into it. But to Dick's surprise, he found Tiki also in the boat, joking and laughing with the crew.

The launch chugged out across the harbour. Dick strapped on the harness of his aqualung, a light diving set consisting of two cylinders of compressed air which was fed to the diver's lungs through a face mask. It was ideal for shallow water, for it allowed the diver much more freedom of movement than the usual cumbersome suit.

The launch anchored over the wreck, and Dick slipped over the side into the clear water. When he surfaced half an hour later, his face was grim.

"Who owns the wreck?" he demanded.

"It was Roko's ship," Tiki answered. "Two months ago my uncle buy it. Very old, very cheap. No wonder it hit reef and sink."

"It's no wonder it sank," Dick agreed. "But its sinking had nothing to do with its age. A great hole has been deliberately blown in its bottom—from the inside! It was sunk on purpose!"

UNDERSEAS PERIL

AS the launch headed back towards the shore, Dick told Tiki what he planned to do.

"The hole's in the starboard side, just forward of the engine room," he said. "I'll make a patch to cover the hole, then take it down and fix it on. When it is in position I'll pump air into the holds and force the water out. That should float the ship, and we can beach her somewhere."

Tiki listened intently. So did one of the crew, a tall, thin man. When the launch reached the jetty, the eavesdropper was the first ashore. He hurried off, paying no attention to the shouts of the boat's coxswain.

With the harbour engineer, Dick busied himself for the next few hours in making the patch for the ship's bottom. It was made of wood and canvas, padded along the edges, and special clamps were fitted to hold it tight to the ship's side.

The brief tropical dusk was almost over by the time the patch was completed and loaded on the launch. Dick had a light meal, and was soon heading out towards the wreck again.

"How you do work now?" Tiki asked. "Too little light for to see."

"I'll supply my own light," Dick grinned, and patted a big case behind him.

"These are electric floodlamps," he explained. "They're even better than daylight down below."

As they neared the wreck, they saw the dark shape of a canoe gliding off. Dick dismissed it as being that of a local fisherman. Helped by Tiki he began to get his gear ready.

The boy seemed to have an instinctive understanding of the use of the various parts of the diving gear. Once again Dick found himself thinking what a good diver Tiki would make.

Once the launch was anchored, the floodlights were lowered into the water. The patch was let down on ropes towards the wreck. Dick clambered over the side, his aqualung already adjusted.

"I've got no lifeline and no telephone with this suit," he told Tiki. "If you want to bring me up, hammer on the bottom of the boat. The sound will carry through the water."

He had leaden weights hung at his belt, and when he let go of the boat's side he sank quickly.

Looking down, he saw that huge schools of fish—striped, spotted and parrot-beaked—flickered and darted about the lights like a swarm of moths. As he dropped into their midst the fish parted for a moment then closed in again, striving to get closer to the lights.

As his feet touched down on the rough coral of the channel bottom, he made for the patch and started to swing it into position. Everything went smoothly for a while. The bottom clamps were on, and he jumped up for the deck of the ship, his body almost weightless in the water.

As he stooped to fix the top clamps, something soggy squelched under his feet. It was a sack. He kicked it off the ship's side, and noted that it left a dark trail behind it as it sank to the bottom.

He tightened a clamp into position, and reached for another.

Donk-donk-donk!

The sound of hammering on the launch's bottom came down clearly to him. Looking upward, Dick could just make out the shape of the launch.

"I wonder if that was a signal?" he muttered. "Everything looks O.K. up above. I might as well get the other clamp fastened, and then the job's done."

He started to tighten the heavy screw.

Thumpety-thumpety! He heard the quick, regular beat of a big tail in the water.

"Shark!" he thought. "And a big one, judging by the sound."

Then the warning signal beat out from the boat's bottom again.

"Perhaps I'd better go up," Dick decided.

He gave the clamp screw a final turn, and moved back from the rail to give himself a clear upward passage. As he did so, something crashed into his back with terrific force, throwing him forward on the deck. He swung around.

Rising from one of the ship's ventilators was a huge, evil, snake-like head. It was a giant moray eel, whose jaws he knew could snap a man's legs like twigs.

The head swayed slowly as coil after coil of the long body drew itself up from the ventilator.

Dick started to rise. While still on his knees he found he could not get up. His aqualung had caught on a projecting girder, and he was trapped.

The moray eel came swirling towards him!

THE OUTWITTING OF ROKO

DICK wriggled and jerked desperately to free himself. But, despite his efforts, he could not get the aqualung clear. Feeling behind, he realised he would have to cut away a section of the girder. Luckily he had a hacksaw at his waist, for he had expected to have to use it to



adjust the patch. With one hand he started to cut the rusted girder. With the other he held his knife—his only protection against the eel.

Thumpety-thumpety!

Again Dick heard the beat of the big shark's tail—nearer now.

A desperate plan flashed across Dick's mind. Deliberately he raised the knife and gashed his leg. A thin stream of blood trailed out like smoke.

Nothing attracts a shark like blood. Down from above came the long grey shape of a fifteen-foot shark, jaws wide open as it weaved and searched for the source of the blood.

And now the moray eel was about to make its first leisurely attack. Once it did, Dick was doomed, for he knew that a moray eel's teeth are so designed that it cannot let go of its prey.

The eel slithered slimily over Dick's legs, and his heart almost ceased to beat.

Then the shark arrived!

It was flashing straight for Dick, jaws agape. The young diver doubled himself up at the last moment.

The shark swept past, but its jaws did not go empty.

In missing Dick they met the moray eel, and closed on the writhing body. The eel was snatched away, just as the young diver had planned.

Dick had a glimpse of it writhing its coils about the shark, then the two passed beyond the light of the lamps.



Suddenly Dick saw Roko crouching on the deck of the sunken ship. The native had grasped the compressor hose, and was about to pull it out! Could Dick prevent Roko from ruining the salvage operation?

Again Dick sought to free himself. It was slow work. There was still half an inch of steel to cut when there came another swirl in the water. Dick swung around, knife in hand, ready to strike. Just in time he withheld the blow.

For grinning at him through the water was Tiki's cheerful face.

Tiki wasted no time. In a flash he took in Dick's predicament, and set to work. With expert hands he began to clear Dick's aqualung from the projection which held it. There was a moment or two of tense expectancy, and then—

The aqualung was free!

Tiki pointed upward urgently, and then the two of them shot towards the surface. A few moments later they were pulling themselves into the launch.

"You no hear warning?" Tiki asked. "Why you not come up one-time?"

"I was just coming up," Dick answered. "But why did you signal?"

Tiki pointed seaward in silent answer, and Dick stiffened in amazement.

The shimmering moonlit surface was being criss-crossed by the fins of dozens of sharks. From out at sea they were making their way in through the channel, against the tide.

"I see them. I think I warn," Tiki said. "One shark, all right. Two shark, all right. Three shark, maybe all right. But many, many sharks——"

He shook his head.

"But what's bringing them?" Dick gasped. "You'd think there was some powerful bait down there that——"

He broke off as he remembered that soggy sack he had disturbed. The trail it had left could have been blood—and blood would bring the sharks in from the sea. But who on earth would dump a sack of meat in the water?

Then his eyes hardened.

Whoever had done so had wished to attract sharks, hoping that they would attack the diver, or at least make it impossible for him to work.

"The same person who sank the ship would be the one who dumped the meat," he murmured. "Tiki, I think your uncle is an evil man."

"Him very rich, very bad," Tiki declared, cheerfully.

But if Roko thought that a few sharks were going to stop Dick clearing the blocked channel he was mistaken. Amongst his gear Dick had some small depth charges. A few of these dropped around the wreck would be enough to scare all the fish, including the sharks, away.

So, during the night, depth charges were dropped at intervals. By dawn, Dick reckoned, the wreck would be clear of sharks.

At dawn, Dick ordered the air compressor out from the shore. This was a powerful pump, mounted on a raft, with a heavy hose leading from the pump.

Dick dived to fix the nozzle of the hose into the wreck, and to seal it so that no air would escape. After he had had a brief rest, the compressor was set to work.

Dick had to go down to check that there were no more leaks, but the wreck's hull proved to be watertight. Slowly, as the air hissed into it, driving out the water, the hulk began to right itself and ease itself upright in the water.

Dick walked along the bottom, almost under the ship as it lifted a little at the bows.

Donk-donk-donk!

The sound of Tiki's signal sent Dick clawing his way upward. He was still a little way under the ship when he saw a shadow on the deck of the wreck.

Someone was standing beside the compressor hose, just where it entered the hold.

Dick drew himself to the wreck's side. As his head appeared over the edge, he found himself staring into the face of Roko.

With a knife between his teeth, Tiki's uncle, clad only in a loin cloth, was straining at the hose. If he freed that hose, the air would gush from the hold.

Without the buoyancy of the air, the ship would sink again and almost certainly capsize.

And Dick was still a little way underneath the ship.

Powerful muscles rippled under Roko's dusky skin as he exerted all his strength.

Whoosh!

Roko had not bargained for the strength behind the air compressor. The air in the hold shot out in a solid jet that threw him backward. His head crashed on a stanchion and he went limp. He started to float upward.

This much Dick saw before his feet hit the bottom again as the ship settled. He could feel her leaning over on him. There was only one way he could save himself, and that was to make the ship lean the other way.

Bracing his legs, he put out all his strength in a furious effort. The ship's keel touched down and she swayed. She was balanced uneasily along her keel.

For a moment Dick feared that all was lost. Then gradually the pressure eased. The ship swayed in the opposite direction. Dick was saved!

Panting after his tremendous effort, Dick moved slowly up on to the ship's deck, and re-fastened the air hose back in its place. Only then did he loosen his belt and head for the surface.

Some anxious islanders were clustered about the still unconscious Roko. Others were trying to protect a tall, thin man from the fury of Tiki.

"He hold me" the boy accused, as Dick reached the boat. "He not let me come to help you when I see Roko dive from another boat."

Dick recognised the thin man immediately. He was the member of the launch's crew who had overheard him talking to Tiki, telling the lad how the ship had been deliberately sunk. He must have warned Roko, and Roko had made that last desperate attempt to prevent the ship being surfaced.

But why should Roko cause his own ship to be sunk, and try to prevent it from being raised?

At that moment a cheer rose from the islanders. The wreck had reached the surface. Slowly it was towed clear of the channel. The banana boats would sail in time!

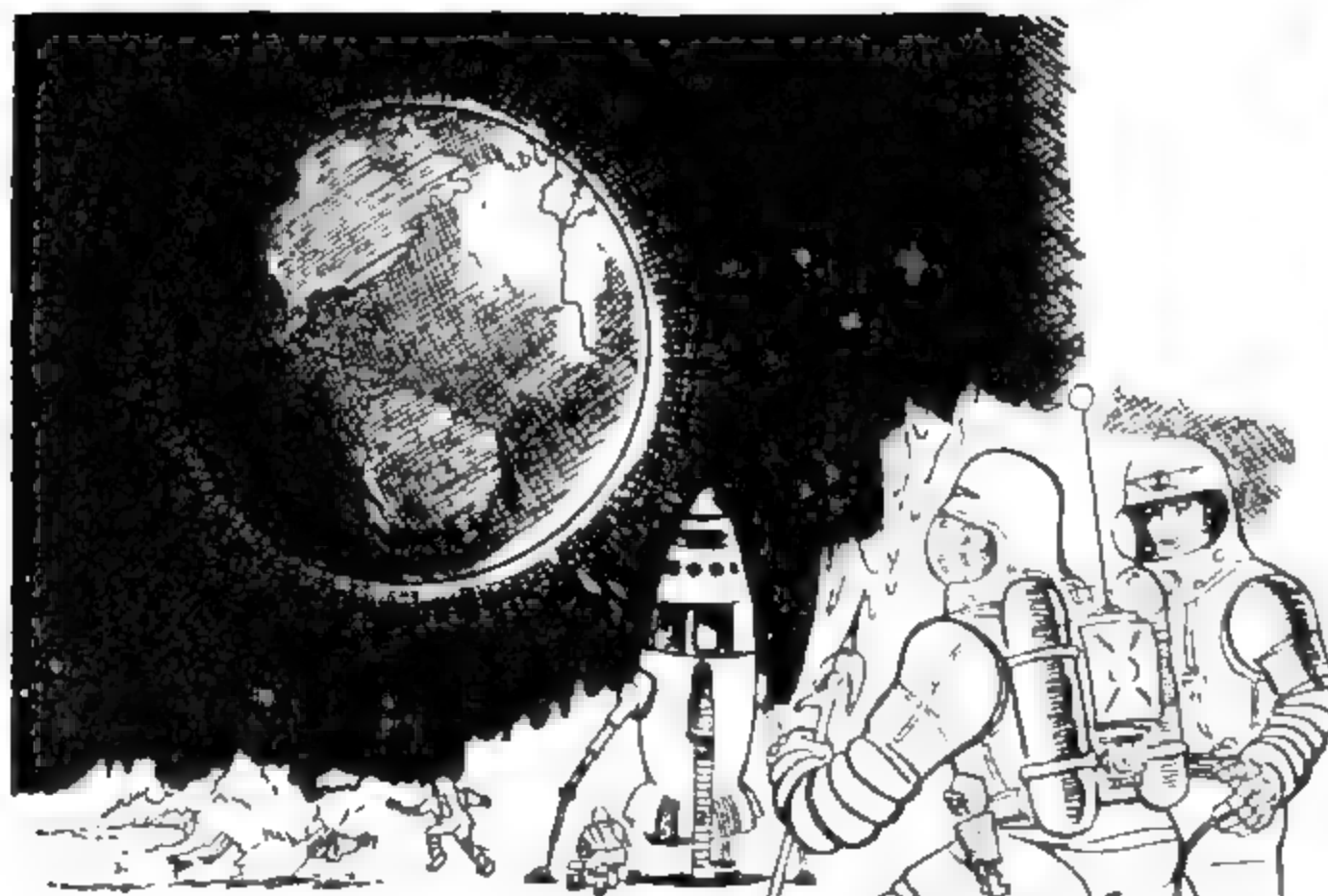
"Aie, aie," jeered an islander as Roko sat up sullenly. "You think you take my plantation. Now I get money and pay off loan. You not get my land."

"So that's it!" Dick gasped. "Roko wanted the planters to lose their money so he could take over their land. That's why he deliberately sank his ship and tried to kill me."

"Very bad man, my uncle," Tiki said. "Now he go to prison long time. Nobody look after Tiki. Only Dick Danver."

His round cheerful face split in a huge grin. This time Dick had not said no.

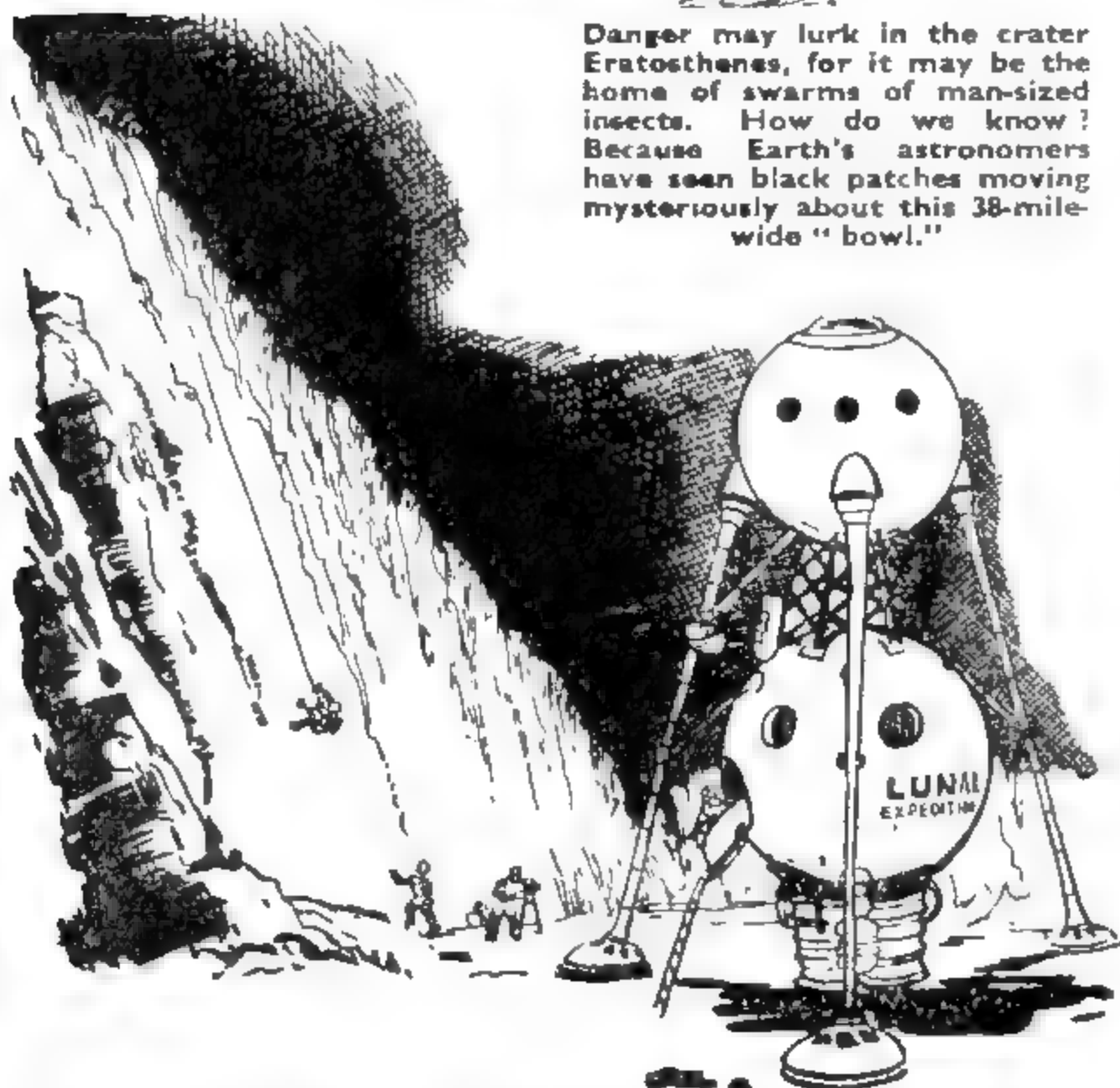
THE END



One of the most amazing sights will be that of our own Earth! It will seem to be four times as big as our Moon. Sparkling white ice caps will be seen at the Poles, and between them will appear dark patches of sea, red deserts, yellow, green and brown land masses, and smudges of cloud. All will be ringed with the bright halo of our atmosphere.



Danger may lurk in the crater Eratosthenes, for it may be the home of swarms of man-sized insects. How do we know? Because Earth's astronomers have seen black patches moving mysteriously about this 38-mile-wide "bowl."



One of the Moon's many attractions is a natural wall which runs in a straight line for 60 miles, and is 800 feet high. It forms a formidable obstacle for intrepid explorers to tackle.

When We

Thrills that Await Space-Travellers—



The surface of the Moon is probably honeycombed with caves of all shapes and sizes. Some would be turned into underground homes and garages for Earth engineers and the machines they would use to clear a site for a settlement.



The men who peer through Earth's telescopes first discovered this fantastic 12-mile-long bridge in 1953. Was it made by Nature or by Moon-beings? This question will remain unanswered—until the first lunar-explorers land.

Reach the Moon

—By HARRY HOLLINSON, D.F.C.



Many of the cracks on the Moon's surface are easily big enough to accommodate all New York's skyscrapers—and there would still be plenty of space to spare. Huge tunnels run right through some of the mountains!



One of the Moon's claims to fame is that it has a mountain 7,000 feet higher than Earth's loftiest peak. It would be a lot less gruelling to climb than Mount Everest, however—for there is no ice-barrier, and gravity-pull isn't very strong.



Before their trip to the Moon, space-men will be "briefed" by scientists on the mysteries to be solved. One concerns the strange light-rays, as blinding as search-lights, that glare from countless craters.



At the Moon's North Pole are mountains 9,000 feet high. The tops are always lit by sunshine, and they sparkle like brilliant diamonds against the black sky. They are called the Mountains of Eternal Light.



What will the Moon's caves contain? Weird, bat-like creatures that cling to vegetation-covered walls? Skeletons of awesome animals that roamed millions of years ago? We on Earth will know the answers when the first landing-party's radio reports are received. And that may well happen in your lifetime!

ALI - AND THE

BLACK CIRCLE

SECRET SOCIETY



VENGEANCE OF THE BLACK CIRCLE

ALI, the servant boy, flattened himself against a marble pillar. With fast-beating heart he peeped cautiously over the edge of a balcony at the thrilling scene below.

As one of the humblest servants of the Rajah of Nizabad, Ali had no right to be in this part of the palace at all. If he were spotted by one of the palace guards he would be in trouble. If it should reach the ears of Shadrim, the Rajah's sharp-tempered secretary, his punishment would probably be a severe beating with a bamboo rod.

Yet he could not resist the temptation to watch what was going on. The Rajah's elephants were being paraded in the courtyard below. The air was filled with shrieks, yells, the clanging of bells and the beating of drums, and the noise was being made by a crowd of privileged servants. The elephants were being rehearsed for a great procession through the city that night, during the course of a great and glorious carnival to celebrate the Rajah's birthday.

The rehearsal was being held to accustom the elephants to the noise they would hear in the crowded streets, and to make sure that they didn't panic during the great occasion itself.

Ali craned his neck to catch a glimpse of a tall,

By Hal Wilton

stately figure, magnificently dressed in red robes, who watched from an archway.

This was the Rajah!

Ali gazed at the Rajah with pride. He often wished that he could have the chance to do some service that would bring him to the notice of the Rajah and show his loyalty.

If they ever met face to face the Rajah would not know him. Only the fact that Ali wore the palace livery—a coat of crimson and gold, with white silk trousers and a white turban—would serve to indicate to the Rajah that Ali was one of his many scores of unknown servants.

Suddenly, as he leaned forward cautiously, Ali became aware of whispered voices coming from a nearby window.

The clamour below made it difficult to hear what was being said, but all at once Ali caught snatches of the mysterious conversation.

"—tonight the Black Circle strikes—our men know their posts. By morning the Rajah will be dead and—"

Thrills Come Fast for Ali when He Tackles a Band of Traitors!

Ali's brain swam. A feeling of horror swept over him. He could scarcely believe that he had heard aright. Everyone knew about the Black Circle, a secret society which had once terrorised Nizabad, but the Rajah had ruthlessly hunted its members down and it was thought that they had all been wiped out.

Ali stared round wildly, trying to see where the voices had come from. But a fresh outburst of clamouring from below drowned the sinister whispers.

For a few seconds Ali could not collect his thoughts. He could hardly bring himself to believe what he had heard. Had he been dreaming? Was it possible that the Black Circle still survived, lurking in holes and hideouts in the city, nursing their hatred against the Rajah? Were they really planning to kill the Rajah during the birthday carnival? Would they dare?

The whole idea seemed fantastic. The Rajah was too well guarded, and too well liked by the mass of his subjects, for such a cruel plan to stand any chance of success.

Yet Ali was sure his ears had not played him a trick.

He turned and ran from the balcony. He raced down a long corridor, looking for someone to tell what he had heard.

Ahead of him a door opened, and a man stepped out. He was tall and lean, with a shaven head, narrow and hawklike features, and rounded shoulders. He wore blue and purple robes that marked him out as being of the highest rank of palace servants, for he was Shadrim, the Rajah's trusted secretary.

Normally Ali would not have dared speak to one so exalted as Shadrim, but now his fears for the Rajah made him forget his humble position.

"O Shadrim! I bear terrible news—the Rajah's life is in mortal danger. The Black Circle, traitors within the palace—" gasped Ali.

Shadrim swung on him with glittering eyes.

"What nonsense is this you speak, boy?" he demanded.

Breathlessly Ali panted out what he had overheard.

The harsh lines on Shadrim's face deepened as he listened.

"And you heard all this—men whispering—with so much noise going on in the courtyard?" demanded Shadrim suspiciously.

"Only a few words here and there," gasped Ali. "O please, you must warn the Rajah, search the palace—"

"You impudent little jackal!" exclaimed Shadrim. "Do you dare to tell me what to do?"

"But the Rajah's life is in danger!"

Shadrim's face grew dark with anger.

"Either you have been daydreaming, or this is a trick to bring yourself to the notice of the Rajah and gain favour in his sight," he snapped.

"I swear to you I speak words of truth," protested Ali.

"I will be lenient with you, and merely suppose that you imagined it," said Shadrim.

"But you will warn the Rajah—?"

"I would not dare go to him with such an unbelievable fairy tale," retorted Shadrim. "Even if the Black Circle still existed they would not dare to plot against the Rajah, and even if they dared, they could not succeed."

Ali looked thunderstruck.

"I command you to forget this fanciful nonsense," Shadrim ordered. "Here. Come with me. I have an errand for you."

He led Ali into a richly furnished room. He took up a huge water melon, and placed it in an ornamented bag.

"All my messengers are occupied with the rehearsal. Take this to Moolim, the fakir who sits beneath the Broken Arch. It is my daily gift," commanded Shadrim.

Ali accepted the bag with relief. He was glad of the opportunity to get away, and think.

He went down to the stables, and saddled Zana, his white pony. It wasn't until he was riding out of the palace gates, into the city streets, that he realised that Shadrim had not thought to ask him what he had been doing in a forbidden part of the palace.

"That was a lucky thing, Zana," he said to the pony. "I might have been beaten, perhaps even banished. But what are we to do about the Rajah?"

Somehow the Rajah must be warned before the carnival procession began. If Shadrim refused to heed Ali's story, Ali would have to find a way of doing it himself. Yet that seemed almost impossible. The Rajah was so well guarded that a person as humble as Ali, even though he wore the palace livery, would not be allowed to approach within a hundred yards of him, much less come close enough to speak to him.

"Before dusk falls we must find a way, Zana," he told his pony. "But first let us discharge this errand to Moolim the fakir, or we shall be in more trouble with Shadrim."

The city streets were colourful, crowded and noisy. The shops, open-fronted, and with their floors raised to waist level, formed a continuous platform on either side. Here, working in full view of their customers, sat the basket-weavers, the potters, the metal workers, the sellers of tangerines and sweet drinks.

Plodding bullock carts and ambling, hump-backed sacred cows with painted horns threaded their way through the crowds.

A barber, squatting on his haunches, shaved a customer by the roadside, and a beggar, surrounded by a cloud of tiny bright-coloured performing birds on leashes, called on Ali for alms as he passed.

Ali was compelled to dismount and lead Zana. As he neared the alley-entrance known as the Broken Arch he saw a crowd gathering round a large, flat bullock cart. The big wheels of the cart were caked with thick yellow clay.

On the cart were three men, two of them tall and muscular, and the third almost a dwarf. They had two performing bears. The dwarf played on a bulb-shaped flute, and one of his companions began to beat on a drum with the palms of his hands.

The two bears reared up. Bells on their paws and ankles jingled merrily.

Ali was in no mood to be entertained, and tried to guide Zana through the crowd, but no one would give way.

Then, to the delight of the onlookers, one of the men sprang at one of the bears, and began to wrestle with it.

Suddenly the man lost his footing. Man and bear toppled from the cart. Ali tried to leap aside. He was too late. He was flung against one of the muddy wheels, and knocked sprawling.

In the confusion Ali lost his bag, but the little dwarf hurriedly dropped his flute, scrambled down, retrieved the bag and helped Ali to his feet.

"A thousand pardons, O exalted one!" the dwarf gasped. "It was an accident. We would not dare insult one who wears the Rajah's uniform."

Ali looked ruefully at his crimson and gold tunic, now daubed with yellow clay from the wheel of the bullock cart. He accepted the bag, caught Zana by the bridle, and pushed on through the crowd.

He emerged by the Broken Arch.

Moolim the fakir, clad in filthy white rags, sat on a bed of rope. The rope bed was his home, his house, his only possession. He carried it with him on his back wherever he went, like a human snail. For all else that he needed to keep him alive he depended on daily gifts from well-wishers.

"I bring you a gift from my master, Shadrim," explained Ali, reaching into the bag.

The next moment he received a stunning shock, for he withdrew from the bag not a water-melon, but a large flat stone!

A TRAITOR IN THE PALACE

"THIS is witchcraft!" gasped Ali. "The melon has been changed into a stone!"

"My son, it was not witchcraft," answered Moolim. "I saw it all. The men with the dancing bears—"

Ali gasped and spun round.

The bullock cart, the men, and their performing bears had gone.

"I have been robbed!" gasped Ali. "Zana, quickly, we must follow the cart!"

"No," urged Moolim. "Let them go, my son. It is better so."

"I can't do that. The melon was yours and they have stolen it. Besides, how can I go back to Shadrim and tell him I let myself be robbed of his gift? He is a hard man. He will have me beaten."

"Better a beating than to follow that cart," Moolim warned. "Those men are of the Black Circle."

Ali let out a startled gasp.

"Black Circle? Men of the secret society? How can you possibly know? What makes you say so?"

"I sit here. I listen. I watch. Year after year the life of the city passes before my eyes. I learn. I remember. Nizabad has no secrets from me," said the fakir.

"There is a mystery here," said Ali. "The Black Circle plans to kill the Rajah tonight. No one will believe me. But it is true. But what has the melon to do with the plot? Why did they go to such trouble to steal it? I must find out. Moolim—you must help me."

The fakir's eyes took on a glazed look. It was plain that he had no intention of risking trouble. No help was to be got from him.

"Learn wisdom, my son. Let the world pass by, and, as it passes, listen, watch, remember—but take no part. It is better thus."

"And let the Rajah be killed?" cried Ali. "No, I'm going to find those men—"

His eyes narrowed as he remembered the yellow clay on the wheels that had become smeared on his coat.

"They must have come across the river by the ford. Nowhere else could the wheels have picked up wet, yellow clay," he declared. "I shall follow them."

He mounted Zana and rode out of the city gates. The dusty road led across a hot, dry plain of dried-up grass and stunted trees until he came to the river, and the ford.

Beyond was a wilderness of foothills and rocky valleys with a few poverty-stricken villages in which a handful of people scratched a living that bordered on starvation.

Few people went this way, yet there were many wheel-tracks, and the mud was pitted with the hoof-marks of bullocks showing that the cart had passed to and fro this way many times.

Ali was alarmed, as he rode, to see how long the shadows were growing. The sun was going down. Within a few hours it would be dusk. The procession would start, and the Rajah would be riding to his doom!

Zana scrambled up a rocky slope. On the skyline Ali saw stunted trees and the outline of a well,

topped by a flat wooden wheel which would be turned by patient oxen.

"There is a village here. We must go carefully," said Ali.

Then he suddenly drew rein with a cry. He had spotted something beside the road. It was a huge water-melon, ripe, juicy, and cut in half. That such a melon should be thrown away, here, in country where people were always parched and hungry, was in itself astounding.

Ali jumped to the ground.

"This is indeed the melon which Shadrim my master gave me to deliver to Moolim. I am sure of it," he cried. "But what mean these strange marks?"

In the middle of the fleshy part of the melon was a curiously shaped deep impression about nine inches long. Ali stared at it, puzzled and excited. The shape was familiar. He had seen its like, many times. But where? He was trying to remember. Then it came to him.

"The Golden Key!"

Of just such a shape was the mighty key to the palace treasure house. The Rajah always wore it on a belt at his waist.

"The melon was cut open. Something was hidden inside it. But it could not be the key. The Rajah always carries it, and would know at once if it were lost," muttered Ali, frowning.

Then a solution occurred to him.

"A copy of the key! There is a plot for the Black Circle to attack the treasure house!"

This idea quickly brought him to another one even more shattering. In all the palace only one man was in a position, was sufficiently trusted, to have an opportunity to copy the key.

"Shadrim! Shadrim and the Black Circle? No, it is too terrible, and yet—"

Shadrim had given him the melon. Shadrim was the only man who could have concealed anything inside it. But if it was a plot, it could not have been an accident that the performing bears should be in Ali's path at the very moment when he was on his way to Moolim.

It was all carefully planned and timed. Shadrim must have known and arranged it. He had used Ali to take the key of the treasure house to the Rajah's enemies.

"But—the treasure house?" Ali frowned. "How can that be connected with the death of the Rajah.

I must try to learn more."

He looked towards the village. All seemed quiet.

He led Zana into the thicket, left him there, and then crept carefully towards the well.

Crouching by the round-ed brick wall, in the shadow of the wooden wheel, he peered towards the village.

The tumble-down huts looked deserted. All looked miserable and poverty-stricken, save for half a dozen fine and well-kept horses behind a railed fence, which contrasted oddly with the poorness of everything else.

There was no sign of the bullock cart.

Then Ali heard the creak of wheels. The cart was returning!

He must not be found here. He must hide. There was no time to reach the thicket where he had left Zana.

Swiftly Ali unwound his turban. He knotted one end to a jutting wooden beam



Hidden in the well, Ali trembled in horror as he listened to the whispering of the two men. They intended to kill the Rajah of Nizabad! How could Ali foil their foul plot?

and let the rest of it unravel into the well. Grasping the turban, he lowered himself down into the well, and in the moment that he disappeared a man came from one of the huts to greet the men with the returning bullock cart.

Ali clung grimly to the dangling turban, and listened to excited voices. Then a shadow fell across his face. Someone was sitting on the edge of the well!

He heard the creaking cart stop.

"Does all go to plan?" asked the men from the hut.

The others came and sat on the rim of the well.

"Perfectly. We entered the treasure house with the false key. Impo the Dwarf has been concealed within the hollow God of Many Arms which will be carried ahead of the Rajah. When the procession reaches the Lotus Gate, Impo will fire his poison dart. The Rajah will fall. That will be the signal to our people to attack. In the confusion they will kill, loot, burn, destroy. Ere dawn the city will be ours!"

Ali's brain reeled as he listened. Somehow he must return and give warning of the terrible plot.

"And Shadrim?" asked a voice.

There was a villainous chuckle from one of the men.

"Shadrim thinks he is to be the new Rajah. But he is too treacherous to be trusted. He will be one of the first to die!"

While Ali was still trying to grasp what he had heard, there came a fresh shout, from the direction of the thicket.

"What is this! A white pony from the Rajah's stables! There must be a spy here somewhere!"

Ali gritted his teeth in alarm

Zana had been found!

THE DWARF ASSASSIN

THE men ran excitedly from the well towards the thicket.

Ali knew that he must act at top speed.

He hauled himself to the rim of the well. Zana was squealing and plunging angrily. Ali put his fingers to his mouth and let out a shrill whistle. In response to the signal, Zana came tearing towards him, flying hoofs scattering the yelling plotters.

Ali leapt from the rim of the well into the saddle. He turned Zana's head towards the city.

"Go like the wind!" he cried.

Wild cries of anger followed Ali as he galloped away. It didn't take the plotters long to recover from their surprise. Glancing back he saw them running towards their horses.

"Run, Zana, run!" he panted. "We've got to beat them."

With sure-footed speed Zana galloped down the rocky trail. But the pursuing horses were big and powerful.

"Faster!" urged Ali. "They're gaining."

When they reached the ford the nearest of his pursuers were only two hundred yards behind.

Daylight was fading now. They flew on towards the city in gathering dusk. Zana was beginning to falter, but the city gate was near.

"We're almost there!" cried Ali.

He was through the city gate, but his pursuers were almost on his heels. Here he was in instant difficulties. The streets were thronged. There were crowds, torch-light processions, firework parties.

Ali swung Zana into a courtyard, and decided to abandon the pony. From here he could move faster on foot. He darted into an alley, looked back—and saw dark, pursuing figures. He double and twisted, trying to throw them off.

In the darkness he stumbled over a reclining figure which he mistook at first for a bundle of rags. It was Moolim the fakir.

"Moolim, you must help me now!" he panted. "Give me your cloak and your bed. It means life and death for the Rajah."

Moolim began to mumble and protest, but Ali was in no mood to waste time. He grabbed the filthy rags and wrapped them round himself. He swung the rope bed across his shoulders, and retraced his steps.

At the mouth of the alley one of the plotters grabbed him roughly.

"Old man, hast seen anything of a youth in palace livery?" snapped one.

"I see nothing, hear nothing," muttered Ali, pulling the rope bed across his head to shadow his face.

He plodded on, and was swallowed up by the swirling crowd, but as he did so he heard yells from the alley. They had found Moolim.

"That was him! Carrying the rope bed!"

Ali threw the rope bed down and charged through the crowd. He looked back. They were coming after him again.

In the distance he heard bells, and the sound of musical instruments. The procession had started on its way.

"I've got to warn them before they reach the Lotus Gate!" muttered Ali wildly.

The crowds slowed him down. He pushed and elbowed, but time was running out. He spotted a house with an outside staircase. He raced up it to the flat roof. A hurried glance down showed him, in a sudden flare of torchlight, another man climbing, a knife between his teeth.

Ali scampered across the flat roof and came to a gap. He leaped it like a mountain goat. As he did

so something hummed past his ear—the assassin's knife.

Ahead, across a sea of flat roofs, he saw the main street through the city. A long procession of decorated and bejewelled elephants were heading for the Lotus Gate.

In front came an elephant bearing on its back the God of Many Arms. Next a richly ornamented howdah in which rode the Rajah.

Ali leaped wildly from roof to roof in a desperate race against time, and close behind followed the Black Circle assassin.

Ali gained a high ledge, overlooking the route of the procession. His pursuer landed on the roof with a thud.

Ali swung himself down, hurtled on to a bright canvas awning that jutted from a house-front only a few yards from the Lotus Gate.

As the leading elephant went swaying by, Ali catapulted himself forward above the waving torches and the heads of the crowd.

He saw a small round door open in the back of the idol. The evil face of the dwarf appeared, blow-pipe at his lips.

Ali landed on the idol, causing it to lurch to one side. Losing his balance, the dwarf pitched out and fell to the ground.

The crowd scattered. Elephants squealed. All was uproar. The procession was stopped. Guards came running. Ali flung himself down as the dwarf began to crawl away.

Ali fell on him and pinned him squealing to the ground. Then he heard a voice roaring in great wrath. He looked up. The Rajah, who had descended from the howdah, towered over him.

Ali, in the grasp of burly guards now, panted out his story.

"This is unbelievable!" thundered the Rajah. "Bring Shadrim. Let him answer these accusations!"

But the Black Circle had carried out one part of their plan in the confusion. The treacherous Shadrim was dead with a knife in his back.

The Rajah refused to abandon the procession. It reformed, and it went on while his men rounded up the plotters among the crowd.



As Ali leapt desperately for the opposite roof-top, another peril threatened him—a heavy dagger thrown by the pursuing traitor!

Ali was taken back to the palace under escort wondering what was to happen to him.

Then, when the procession had returned, a squad of guards marched him to the Rajah's audience chamber. The Rajah, seated on a gold throne, greeted Ali with a flashing smile.

"In all my kingdom you have proved yourself the bravest and most trustworthy. Those I have raised to high places have betrayed me, but you, whose very name I do not yet know, the humblest of my servants, have proved the most loyal. Can you read and write?"

"Y-yes your highness," stammered Ali.

"Then this shall be your reward. I raise you to be my secretary in Shadrim's place!" boomed the Rajah.

Ali didn't know whether he was on his head or his heels.

"What have you to say?" asked the Rajah.

"I—I must go and look for Zana, my pony. He deserves a special bag of oats," gulped Ali.

"No! Go not yourself. Stay with me, and send someone. Anyone. From now on all in the palace are your servants," cried the Rajah.

And the new royal secretary, Ali, could only gasp.

THE END

SKIPPER DAN'S PIRATE ROUND-UP

BY
ROY
LICKSON

DAN GRAY WAS THE SKIPPER OF A COASTING STEAMER WHICH TRADED IN THE YELLOW SEA. WHEN HEADING FOR THE PORT OF HO-NAN, A TANGLED MASS OF WEEDS FOULED HIS PROPELLER. HE AT ONCE STOPPED THE SHIP AND WENT DOWN TO DEAL WITH THE TROUBLE

WEARING A FROGMAN'S OUTFIT, DAN WORKED STEADILY AT THE JAMMED PROPELLER. AND AT LAST HE MANAGED TO CLEAR IT

THERE! EVERYTHING SHOULD BE OKAY NOW. I'LL NIP BACK ON DECK AND WE'LL GET CRACKING AGAIN

CURLY KEEN, HIS SECOND IN COMMAND, HAD BEEN EAGERLY AWAITING DAN'S RETURN

ALL SERENE, SKIPPER?

YES, CURLY. START UP THE ENGINE. WE'VE LOST ENOUGH TIME ALREADY

AS DAN CLAMBERED ABOARD, HE WAS JOINED BY HIS PASSENGER, THE WEALTHY MANDARIN OF HO-NAN

THIS DELAY IS MOST UNFORTUNATE, CAPTAIN. I CHARTERED YOUR SHIP BECAUSE YOU SAID THAT YOU COULD GET ME TO HO-NAN BY NOON. IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT I SHOULD BE THERE BY THAT HOUR

I DIDN'T BARGAIN FOR A FOULED PROPELLER, MANDARIN. THE ONLY WAY I CAN LAND YOU THERE ON TIME NOW IS BY LAYING A COURSE THROUGH THE DRAGON STRAITS. ARE YOU PREPARED TO TAKE THE RISK?

I MUST! I KNOW THAT THE STRAITS ARE THE HAUNT OF PIRATE LI FANG. BUT IT CANNOT BE HELPED

AS DAN ALTERED COURSE, HE SMILED GRIMLY AT HIS PASSENGER

IF LI FANG KNEW YOU WERE ABOARD, MANDARIN, HE'D BE SURE TO STRIKE. HE COULD DEMAND A BIG RANSOM FOR YOUR LIFE

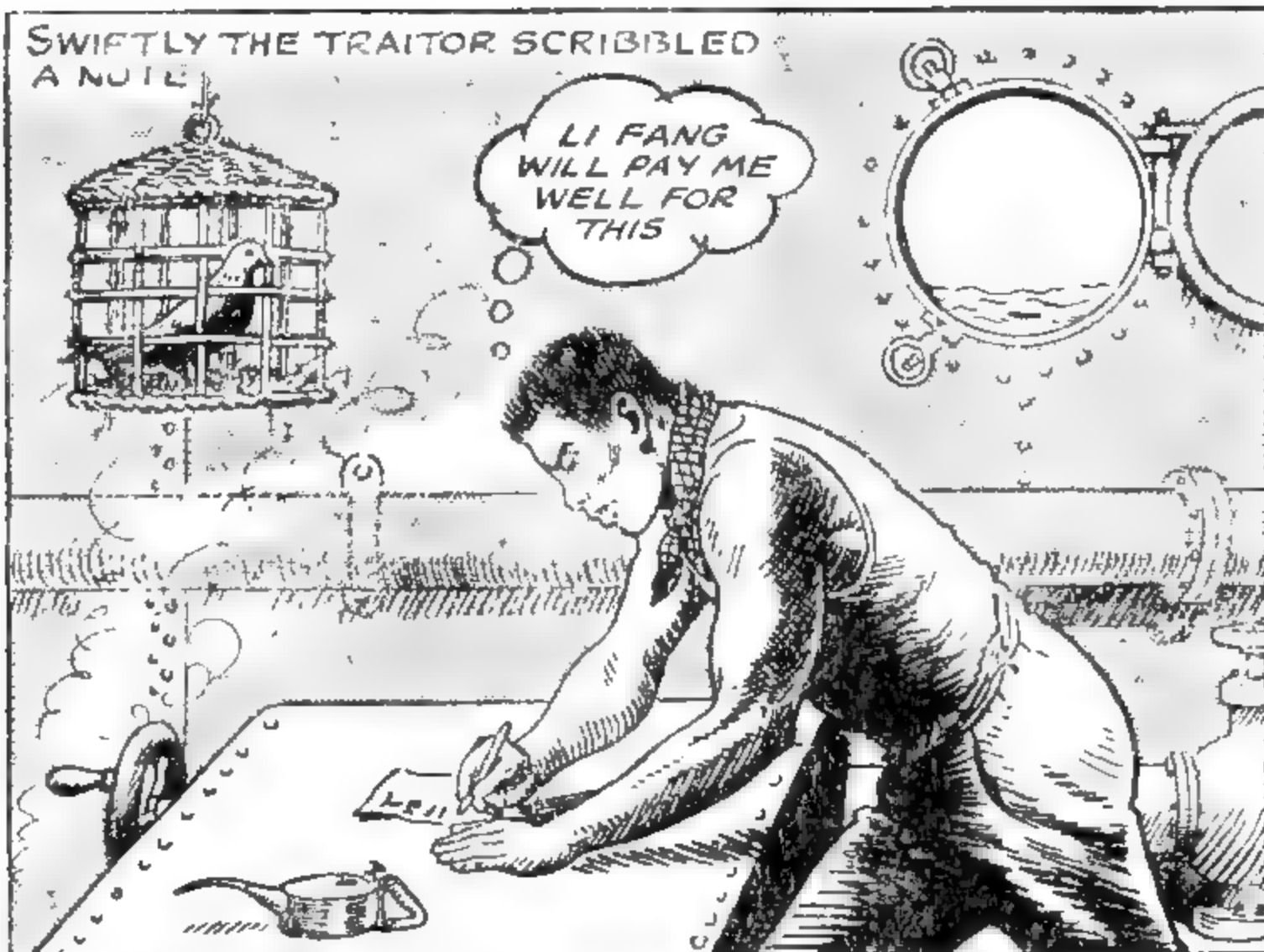
IT IS INDEED FORTUNATE THAT HE DOESN'T KNOW

NEITHER DAN NOR THE MANDARIN REALISED THAT LEE SOO, THE CHINESE STOKER, WAS LISTENING TO THEIR CONVERSATION

SO THEY HEAD FOR DRAGON STRAITS! THAT WILL BE GOOD NEWS FOR LI FANG. I MUST SEND HIM A MESSAGE—VERY QUICK

SWIFTLY THE TRAITOR SCRIBBLED
A NOTE

LI FANG
WILL PAY ME
WELL FOR
THIS



ATTACHING THE NOTE TO A CARRIER
PIGEON, THE CHINAMAN TOSSED THE
BIRD INTO THE AIR



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE A LOOK-OUT AT LI FANG'S
PIRATE HIDE-OUT GAVE A CRY OF EXCITEMENT

SEE, MASTER--A
PIGEON APPROACHES!
LEE SOO HAS NEWS
FOR US



SPLENDID!
BRING ME THE
MESSAGE AS SOON AS
THE BIRD ALIGHTS

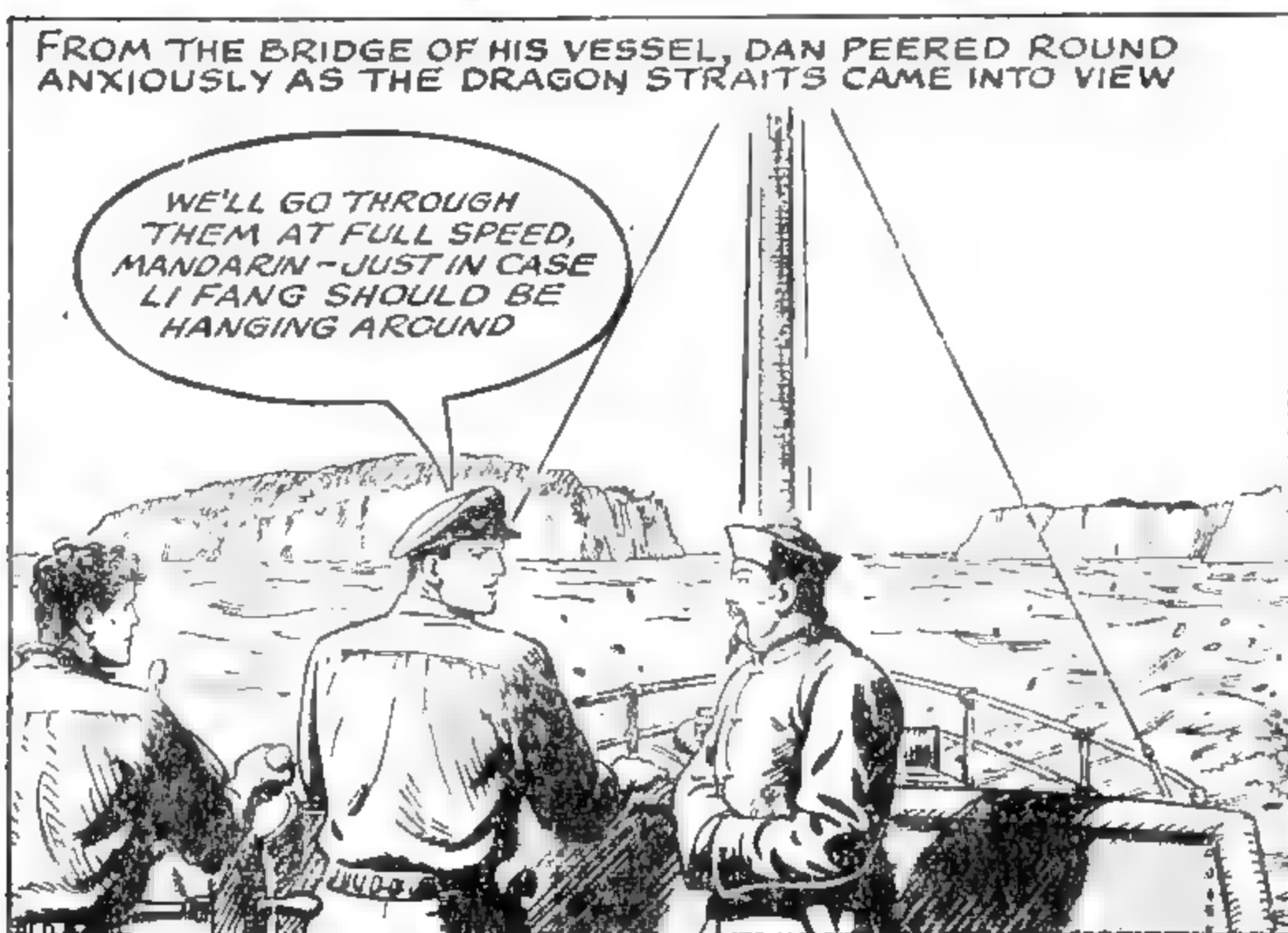
WITHIN A MINUTE THE PIRATE CHIEF WAS READING
THE MESSAGE FROM THE TREACHEROUS
STOKER

THE MANDARIN
OF HO-NAN PASSING
THROUGH THE DRAGON
STRAITS? HE WILL
BE A RICH PRIZE
INDEED. WE WILL
PREPARE FOR
ACTION



FROM THE BRIDGE OF HIS VESSEL, DAN PEERED ROUND
ANXIOUSLY AS THE DRAGON STRAITS CAME INTO VIEW

WE'LL GO THROUGH
THEM AT FULL SPEED,
MANDARIN--JUST IN CASE
LI FANG SHOULD BE
HANGING AROUND



SUDDENLY CURLY UTTERED A YELL

SKIPPER!
LOOK AT THAT JUNK
SHOOTING ACROSS OUR
COURSE! IF IT'S LI FANG
AND HIS GANG, WE'RE
IN FOR TROUBLE!



INSTANTLY DAN SPRANG TO THE ENGINE ROOM HATCH

PILE ON STEAM!
FULL SPEED AHEAD!
STOKE HER UP,
YOU LUBBER!



NO SOONER HAD DAN'S HEAD VANISHED FROM THE HATCH THAN LEE SOO SNATCHED UP A HUGE WRENCH

FULL SPEED?
ME THINK NOT. ME
STOP SHIP MIGHTY
QUICK



SAVAGELY THE CHINESE STOKER FLUNG THE STEEL WRENCH INTO THE HEART OF THE POUNDING MACHINERY

NOW MANDARIN
AND FOREIGN DEVILS WILL
SOON BE AT THE MERCY OF
LI FANG-- AND I SHALL GET
RICH REWARD



AS THE ENGINE SHUDDERED TO A STANDSTILL, DAN SWUNG ROUND IN AMAZEMENT

WHAT IN THUNDER
IS LEE SOO UP TO?
THOSE PIRATES WILL
BE ON US ANY
MINUTE!



WHAT THE
HECK IS THE
MATTER?

SOMETHING
WRONG WITH ENGINE,
CAP'N! LEE SOO SOON
PUT RIGHT-- NOT
BE LONG --

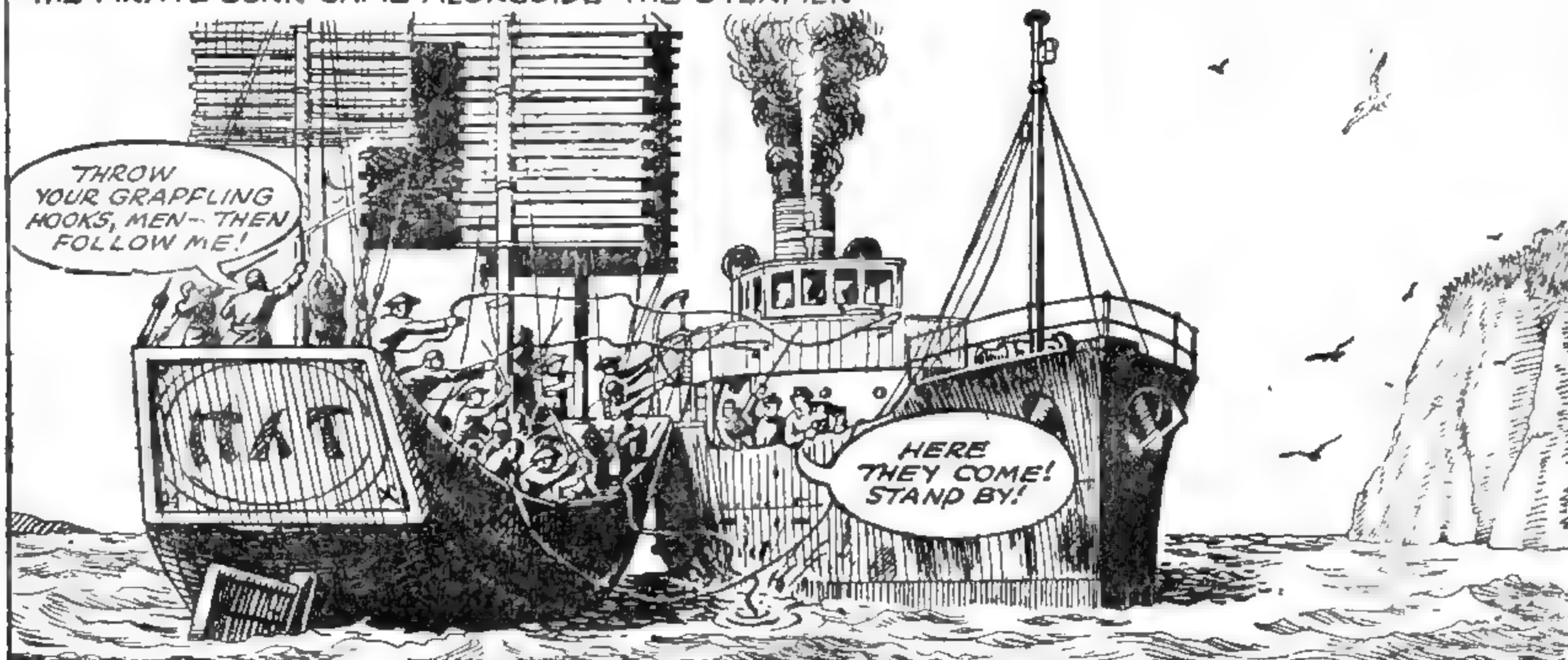
WHIPPING OUT HIS GUN, SKIPPER DAN RACED BACK TO THE BRIDGE

ENGINE'S
OUT OF ACTION.
WE'LL HAVE
TO FIGHT
FOR IT!

FIGHT?
THEN THE PIRATE
DOGS SHALL TASTE
THE EDGE OF MY
ANCESTRAL
SWORD!



THE PIRATE JUNK CAME ALONGSIDE THE STEAMER



LED BY LI FANG, THE PIRATES SWARMED TO THE ATTACK



FIGHTING MADLY AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS, DAN AND HIS LITTLE PARTY WERE DRIVEN BACK



UNSEEN, THE CRAFTY LEE SOO CREPT UP THE STAIRS BEHIND THE GALLANT DEFENDERS



A SLIGHT SOUND FROM BEHIND MADE
CURLY TURN ROUND



SKIPPER!
BEHIND YOU!

LEE
SOO! WHAT
THE--?

DODGING THE KNIFE-BLOW, DAN SMASHED HOME A
TERRIFIC UPPERCUT TO THE STOKER'S JAW



I GET
IT ALL NOW.
YOU'RE THE
SKUNK WHO
PUT US IN
THIS
MESS



NIP DOWN
INTO THE ENGINE-
ROOM, CURLY,
AND SEE IF YOU
CAN START THE
ENGINE. THAT
SKUNK MIGHT
ONLY HAVE
SHUT IT
OFF

AS CURLY RACED OFF, DAN AND THE MANDARIN
CONTINUED TO GIVE BATTLE



DON'T GIVE UP,
MANDARIN! WE'RE
NOT BEATEN YET!

THE SIGHT OF THE DECK-HOSE
GAVE DAN AN IDEA



THIS SHOULD HOLD
THEM OFF UNTIL CURLY
GETS THE ENGINE
GOING

DAN TURNED ON THE HOSE, AND A HIGH-PRESSURE JET
OF WATER SMASHED INTO THE PIRATES



THAT'S GIVEN THEM
SOMETHING TO THINK
ABOUT!

HI-YEE!
SWEEP THEM INTO
THE SEA!

MEANWHILE, IN THE ENGINE-ROOM --



DESPERATELY CURLY DASHED BACK TO THE DECK-HOUSE



THE PIRATES AT ONCE RENEWED THE ATTACK



DAN HAD NO THOUGHTS OF ESCAPE, HOWEVER!



TO THE PALS' DISMAY, THE MANDARIN SLITHERED TO A HALT



IN A FLASH DAN SNATCHED UP HIS FROGMAN OUTFIT



WE'RE NOT LEAVING YOU, MANDARIN! QUICK! PUT THIS ON. CURLY AND I WILL DIVE WITH YOU AND HANG ON TO YOU

THE NEXT MOMENT--

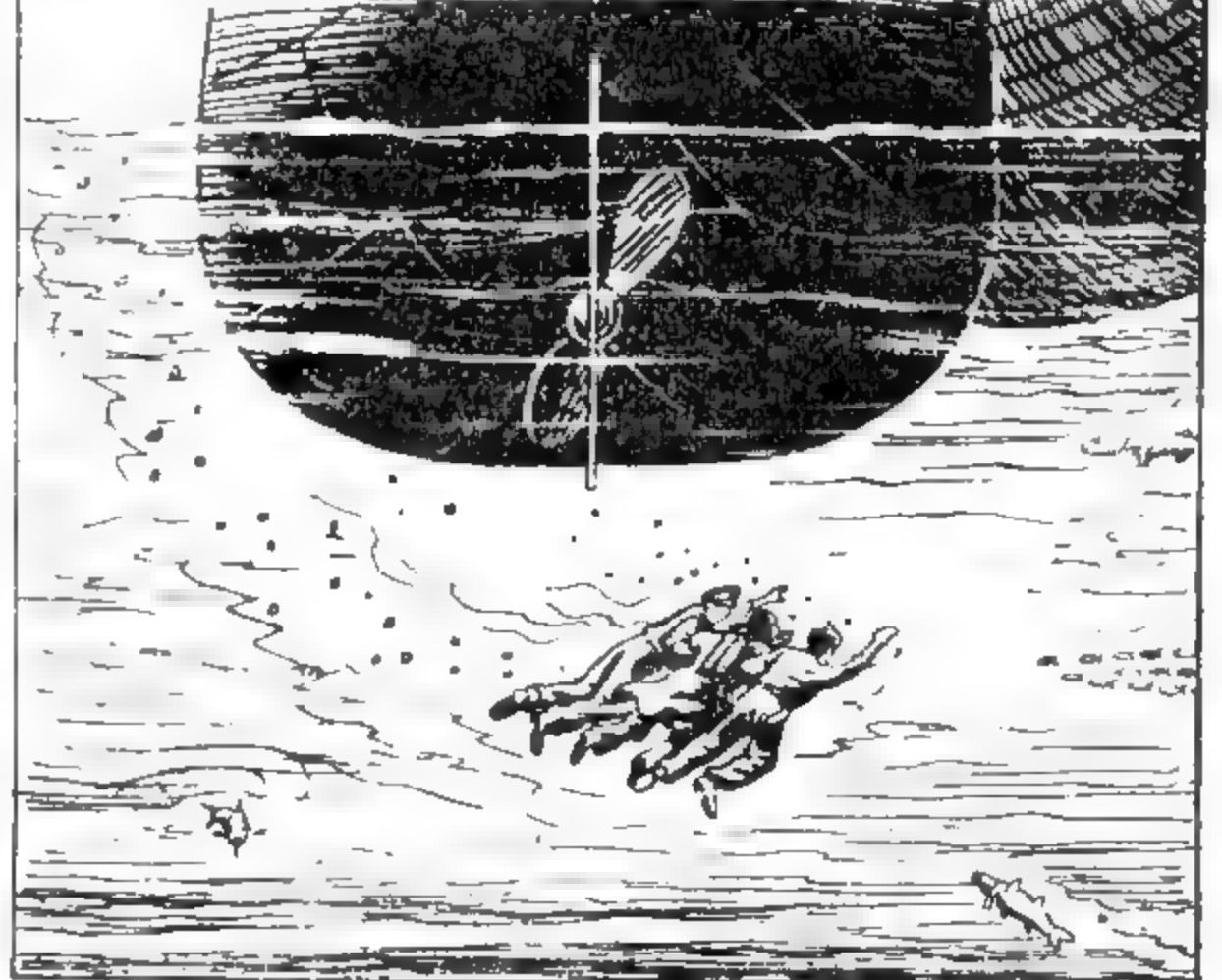


THE PIRATES BEGAN FURIOUSLY TO FIRE INTO THE WATER WHERE THE TRIO HAD DISAPPEARED, BUT LI FANG HOWLED TO HIS MEN TO STOP



TAKE CARE WHERE YOU SHOOT, STUPID FOOLS! THE MANDARIN IS WORTH MUCH GOLD IN RANSOM

SWIMMING STRONGLY, CURLY AND DAN TOWED THE MANDARIN DEEP DOWN UNDER THE STEAMER



THEY BROKE SURFACE ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE PIRATE JUNK



IT'S OKAY. THERE'S NO ONE ON BOARD. WE'LL GRAB LI FANG'S VESSEL AND GET CLEAR BEFORE OUR OWN SHIP BLOWS ITSELF SKY-HIGH!

EVEN AS THE TRIO USED POLES TO PUSH THE JUNK AWAY, THEY WERE SPOTTED BY ONE OF THE PIRATES



MASTER! MASTER! WHITE DEVILS AND MANDARIN STEAL JUNK!

BY THE PURPLE DRAGON, THEY SHALL NOT ESCAPE US NOW

LI FANG TURNED TO THE CHINESE STOKER

START THE STEAMER'S ENGINE, AND QUICKLY WE WILL OVERTAKE THEM

I CANNOT, O MIGHTY MASTER. THE ENGINE IS WRECKED AND THE SHIP DOOMED



THE VERY NEXT MOMENT THE SHIP'S BOILERS EXPLODED WITH A SOUND LIKE THUNDER



DAZED AND HALF-DROWNED, THE PIRATES CLUNG TO FLOATING DEBRIS



ABOARD THE CHINESE JUNK, DAN WHIRLED A COIL OF ROPE. THE MANDARIN STARED AT HIM IN ASTONISHMENT

SURELY YOU WOULD NOT TRY TO SAVE THOSE PIRATE DOGS?

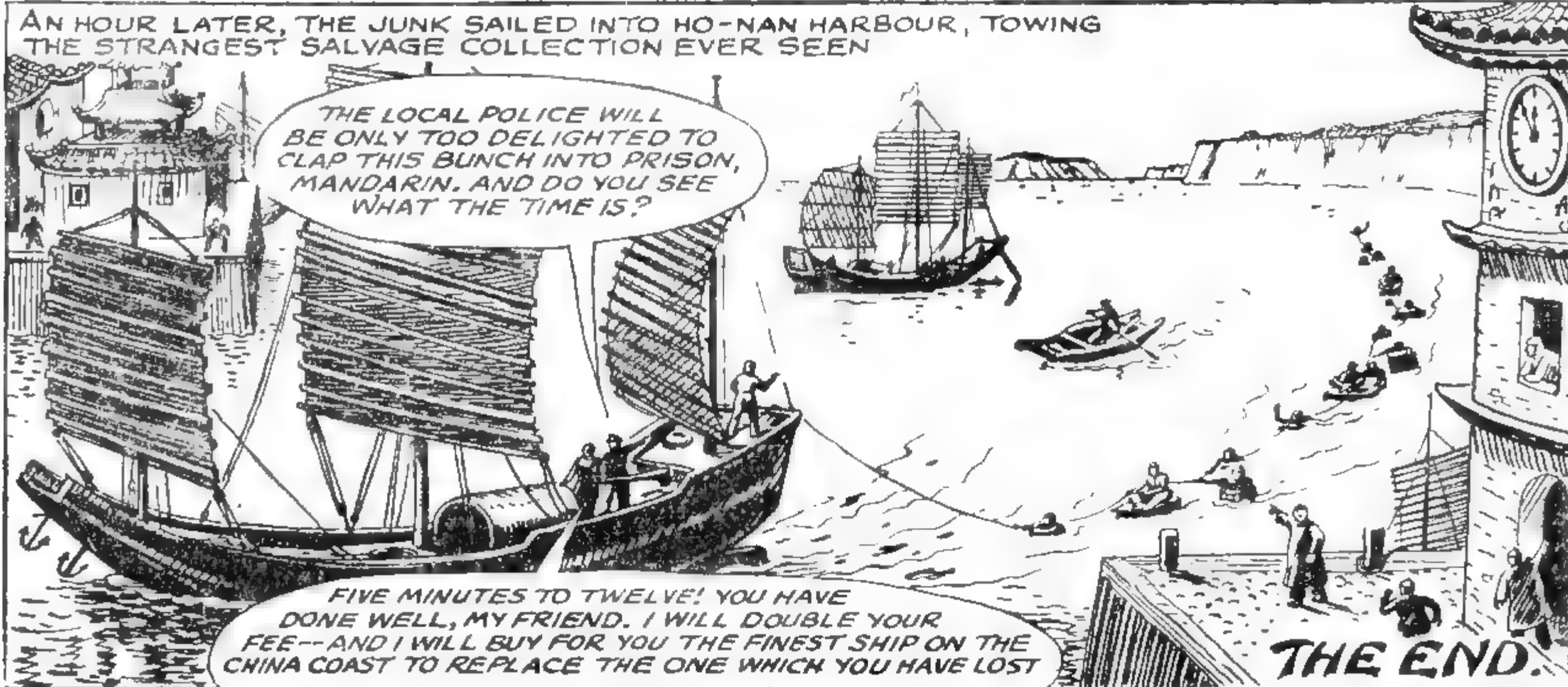


I AM GOING TO MAKE SURE THEY NEVER PLAGUE THE DRAGON STRAITS AGAIN, MANDARIN

AN HOUR LATER, THE JUNK SAILED INTO HO-NAN HARBOUR, TOWING THE STRANGEST SALVAGE COLLECTION EVER SEEN

THE LOCAL POLICE WILL BE ONLY TOO DELIGHTED TO CLAP THIS BUNCH INTO PRISON, MANDARIN. AND DO YOU SEE WHAT THE TIME IS?

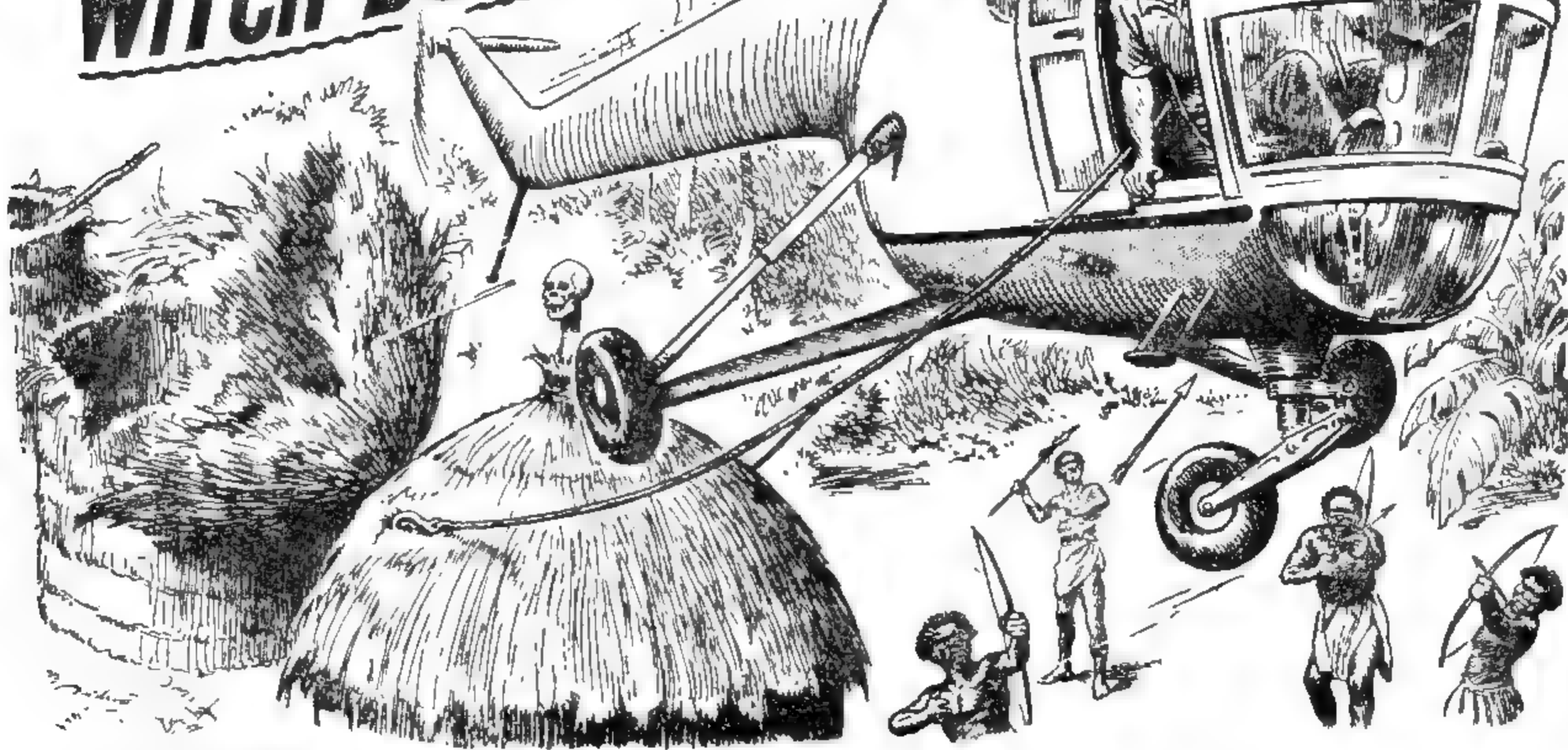
FIVE MINUTES TO TWELVE! YOU HAVE DONE WELL, MY FRIEND. I WILL DOUBLE YOUR FEE--AND I WILL BUY FOR YOU THE FINEST SHIP ON THE CHINA COAST TO REPLACE THE ONE WHICH YOU HAVE LOST



THE END.

BUZZ'S WHIRLYBIRD

OUTWITS *the* WITCH-DOCTOR



SCHOOL-BOOKS FROM THE SKIES!

BUZZ TRENTAM steered his clattering helicopter towards a village clearing in the jungle. Looking down he saw small, excited figures rushing about below, and above the roar of his engine he heard shrill voices.

"Here comes the whirlybird! The whirlybird!"

Buzz kept the 'copter hovering, not daring to drop it lower for fear of hitting someone.

"Those darned kids!" he said to himself. "They'll be the death of me one of these days."

But suddenly the figure of a tall, broad-shouldered white man appeared from one of the huts.

"Back, everybody!" he shouted. "Out of the way. Make way for the whirlybird."

An open space appeared below. Buzz settled the helicopter gently and switched off the engine. Then he turned to the white man with a cheery grin.

"Thanks, Steve! Your school-books have arrived, so I thought I would bring them straight over. I know you've been getting impatient for them," he said.

"That's fine," answered Steve Barlow. "How's the helicopter business, Buzz?"

"Booming," declared Buzz. "Getting better all the time."

By Harry Clements

Buzz was a go-ahead young man who had hit on a bright idea. Here, on this still backward and half-savage island of Baratra in the East Indies, he had set himself up in business as a local "carrier" with his helicopter. There were few roads. Swamps, bogs, and river fords that became torrents in the rainy season made lorry transport almost impossible. In the past most supplies had been moved by river. Journeys that had taken days by canoe could be done in an hour or two by the helicopter.

At about the time Buzz had decided to start his helicopter service, Steve Barlow had also come out, at the invitation of the local chief, to start a village school.

The two men had become firm friends.

The excited village children crowded round the helicopter, eager to lend a hand as Buzz unloaded the parcels of school-books.

A bright-eyed boy of about twelve elbowed his way to the front. He was Bobo, son of the village Chief. He gazed eagerly at Buzz.

"Did the whirlybird bring anything for me, Tuan?" he asked

His Sensational Sky-Hook Stunt Catches Jungle Kidnappers Napping!

Buzz pretended to think it over, as if he wasn't quite sure.

"Now you come to mention it, I believe there was something else," he said.

He climbed back into the helicopter, and lifted some sacking—revealing a brand new bicycle!

Cries of wonder went up from the other native lads. Bobo had seen pictures of bicycles in the magazines Buzz had brought to the island, and had pestered his father, the Chief, until he was allowed to have one. It was the first that had ever been seen on Baratra.

"Will you teach me to ride it, Tuan Barlow?" Bobo asked the island schoolmaster.

"You'll soon get the hang of it," nodded Steve.

Bobo was the envy of all eyes as he wheeled the bicycle towards his father's hut.

"You didn't forget the boat?" Steve whispered to Buzz.

Buzz snapped his fingers.

"Good job you reminded me. I almost forgot," he admitted.

He ducked back aboard the helicopter, and came out with a really super model yacht. Steve called Bobo back.

"This seems to be your lucky day. The whirlybird has also brought the prize I promised you."

Gasps of admiration and envy went up from the other native lads. Some of them seemed to think that it was a bit much that Bobo should receive two such magnificent gifts in the same day.

Steve turned to them.

"If you want prizes you must work," he said.

"Who knows—it may be someone else's turn next time."

The crowd slowly dispersed, and Steve invited Buzz to his hut. They were crossing the compound when the Chief emerged from his hut—tall, dignified, and grave.

"Tuan Barlow, you are too generous, you make my son such a magnificent gift," he declared.

"He earned it," chuckled Steve. "I promised a prize for the best work in the class, and Bobo was far ahead of all the others. You showed great wisdom when you allowed me to start this school here. Bobo is learning fast. He is a brilliant lad. He will grow up to be a great credit to Baratra and to his father."

The Chief bowed gravely, and returned to his hut.

"You're doing great work here, Steve," Buzz said admiringly.

"I'm not so sure about that," replied Steve.

"There are plenty of people who don't like to see changes. They prefer the old ways. They'd be only too glad of the chance to get rid of me—and of you too. Let me give you a warning—"

Suddenly a series of wild shrieks rent the air.

The pals dashed to the door of the hut. A

frantic black figure was doing a whirling dance outside the Chief's hut.

"There's one of the worst of 'em—Sarja, the witch doctor," grunted Steve. "He hates the pair of us. If he had a chance to get rid of us, or do either of us a dirty trick, he'd jump at it. The new ideas that we're bringing to Baratra are making him a back number."

Sarja, whose hair was matted with clay, and who wore hideous ornaments of snake-skin and bones, was yelling at the top of his voice.

"Come forth, O Chief! I have a message from the jungle gods!"

The Chief appeared at the doorway of his hut, arms folded grimly.

"What means this, Sarja?" he demanded coldly.

"The gods of the jungle have spoken to me, their chosen prophet!" howled Sarja. "They command that you stop imitating the ways of the white man, that you banish his devil-machines from our village, and return to the ways of our fathers."

"The days of superstition are past," returned the Chief severely. "The sounds that you hear are not the voices of gods, but the squeak of bats and the chirrup of crickets. I heed them not. I do what is best for my people."

"Take heed," howled the witch doctor. "Return to the old ways, lest the jungle gods smite you in their anger."

For a moment the Chief's eyes flickered with a nervous uneasiness. Then he drew himself up angrily.

"Begone. You offend me," he said with solemn majesty, and returned to his hut.

"See what I mean about Sarja?" said Steve.

"I wouldn't worry. The Chief seems to have him taped," chuckled Buzz.

"He's on our side now. But if things began to go wrong he might change his mind," warned Steve. "I wouldn't put it past Sarja to try some dirty work. We must keep an eye on him."

Buzz spun round, and gazed across the compound.

"Talking of keeping an eye on him—where's he gone? He vanished mighty quickly."

The two pals looked round the village in surprise. Then Buzz uttered a howl of fury.

"Why there he is! He's sneaked inside the whirlybird!"

Buzz charged across the compound just in time to grab the witch doctor as he sprang from the cabin of the helicopter.

"You cunning demon!" Buzz said furiously. "You were trying to tamper with this machine so that I'd crash! If I catch you hanging round my 'copter again I'll give you a jolly good hiding."

Sarja drew back with a howl. He scooped up a handful of dust. He flung it at Buzz and then

began to caper madly, screeching wild incantations and curses.

"You needn't think you can put the wind up me with your black magic," stormed Buzz. "Go on—clear off, you ugly blighter."

Sarja raised his fist, but Steve grabbed his wrist warningly and he slunk away, his evil eyes flashing with hate as he muttered threats through his teeth.

"I wish you hadn't handled him quite so roughly," Steve said with a frown. "He's an ugly customer, and you've made a real enemy of him now. He'll never forgive you. You'd better watch your step."

"Don't worry—if he tries any nonsense, I'll be ready for him," promised Buzz.

THE FLOATING S.O.S.

SOON Buzz took off from the village to continue his round of the island—delivering goods and collecting orders.

It was late in the evening by the time he returned to his headquarters. These consisted of a riverside warehouse and bungalow, which he had bought from a man who had tried unsuccessfully to run a trading post and river steamer service. The scheme had failed.

In fact, no trading venture had succeeded in Baratra until Buzz had arrived with his helicopter and his up-to-date ideas. Even now there were still large parts of the island where the villagers were so backward, or the Chiefs so mistrustful, that Buzz was unwelcome. But the progressive pilot meant to win them all over in time.

He spent the evening going through his accounts with his native clerk.

"We've had a record month, Jan," he said proudly. "But we've only scratched the surface yet. I won't be satisfied until I've got a whole fleet of helicopters and pilots working for me, maybe branching out to other islands—"

He broke off and grinned ruefully.

"I'm running ahead of myself—talking about tackling the other islands while there's still so much to do in Baratra."

He walked to the wall, where he had fastened a big map covered with pins; these marked the villages and settlements where he ran his helicopter service.

"Look, here's a place up river, almost on our doorstep; that we haven't managed to get into yet. Skull-Pole Valley—"

There was a quick intake of breath from the clerk.

"You stay away from there, Boss Buzz. Skull-Pole Valley is a bad place. Bad people. Devil worshippers—" he broke off. "Boss! The radio. Someone's putting out a distress call."

Buzz darted to his short-wave set. A pilot light was blinking. He clamped on the headphones.

"Steve Barlow calling Buzz Trentham! Steve Barlow calling Buzz Trentham!"

Buzz flicked the transmitter switch down.

"Buzz here. What's the trouble, Steve old sport?"

"Buzz!" Above the crackle of static he heard Steve's voice. "We're in real trouble here. Young Bobo has disappeared. He went off on his new bicycle to sail his boat. He's been gone hours."

"Don't panic," urged Buzz. "He'll show up. He can't have gone far. There are no roads worth mentioning."

"That's what worries me. Where can he have gone? They're blaming us, Buzz—you for bringing the stuff, and me for letting him have it."

"Stop worrying, Steve. I'm sure he'll turn up safe and sound. But I'll take the whirlybird out right away and see if I can spot him," Buzz promised.

"Thanks a lot. This thing has got me worried. We're organizing search parties," Steve answered.

Buzz turned away from the radio with a scowl.

"I don't like the sound of it," he declared. "I don't like the sound of it at all."

"But Boss, you told Tuan Barlow not to worry," exclaimed the clerk.

"Sure I did. He's worried enough already. No sense in making him feel worse," retorted Buzz. "Just the same, I'm not going to rest easily until that boy's found."

Buzz took off in the helicopter, and cruised up and down above the jungle treetops, anxiously scanning the trails until dark. He covered scores of miles, but there was no sign of either Bobo or the bicycle.

At last he had to give up. It was getting too black to see anything.

As soon as he had landed the helicopter he sent out a radio call to Steve, but there was still no news.

"We're keeping up the search, though there's not much hope of finding anything at night," Steve reported desperately.

"I'll be standing by all night," Buzz promised. "Call me if you need me."

Jan came in with a sheaf of papers.

"You want to go through your business calls for tomorrow, Boss?" he asked.

Buzz waved them aside.

"Tomorrow's trips are all cancelled. We're doing nothing else until Bobo is found," he declared.

He remained by the radio, drinking strong coffee made by the clerk, to keep himself awake. At intervals he put through calls to Steve. There was still no news, and the villagers were getting panicky.

"Sarja is making plenty out of this," Steve announced grimly. "He says that the bike is a white devil machine that has carried Bobo away."

He says that the jungle gods won't let the boy back until you and I have been cleared out. He's got half the village believing him already."

"What about the Chief?" asked Buzz anxiously.

"He isn't saying anything. But if there's much more of this type of thing he'll be backing Sarja."

"What's he done about the school?" questioned Buzz.

"School as usual tomorrow," answered Steve grimly.

"That's something, anyway. It shows he hasn't lost faith in you yet."

"Don't kid yourself. That's to make sure of keeping me here. I tell you, Buzz, if anything has happened to that lad neither you nor I will get out of Baratra alive!"

Buzz glanced from the window.

"It's just beginning to get light. I'm going to start flying again. Don't give up hope, Steve. We'll find Bobo somehow."

He ran out, calling to his clerk.

"Come with me," he instructed. "Two pairs of eyes are better than one."

They loaded some gear into the helicopter, and chugged into the upper air.

They moved along above the river at tree-top height.

"Bobo went to sail his boat. The most likely place to find signs of him is somewhere here," Buzz said grimly.

They cruised up and down for half an hour without any luck.

"Guess we're wasting our time—" began Buzz, and then let out a yell. "Look! Down there. On the water. Do you see what I see?"

Jan strained his eyes. At first he saw nothing unusual. Then he let out a gasp.

"Looks like a boat, Boss. A toy boat!"

"That's exactly what it is! The toy boat Steve gave to Bobo. By thunder, it looks as if there's something written on the sail. We've got to get hold of that boat. It's a clue!"

Buzz dropped the helicopter until it was almost touching the water. There was nowhere to land, for the banks were thick with vegetation on either side.

But that was no problem to Buzz. He had come equipped for emergencies. Amongst the gear he had dumped aboard was a stout rope with steel hooks at the end.

Swiftly he lowered the rope until the hooks trailed in the water. Then he sent the helicopter churning forward in pursuit of the toy boat.

The hooks caught the sail of the boat.

"Got it!" yelled Buzz triumphantly.

With breathless care he hauled in the line until the boat was safe. A message had been scrawled on the white sail with a charred stick.

"It's a message from Bobo right enough—listen," Buzz cried. "Help. Prisoner in Skull-Pole Valley."

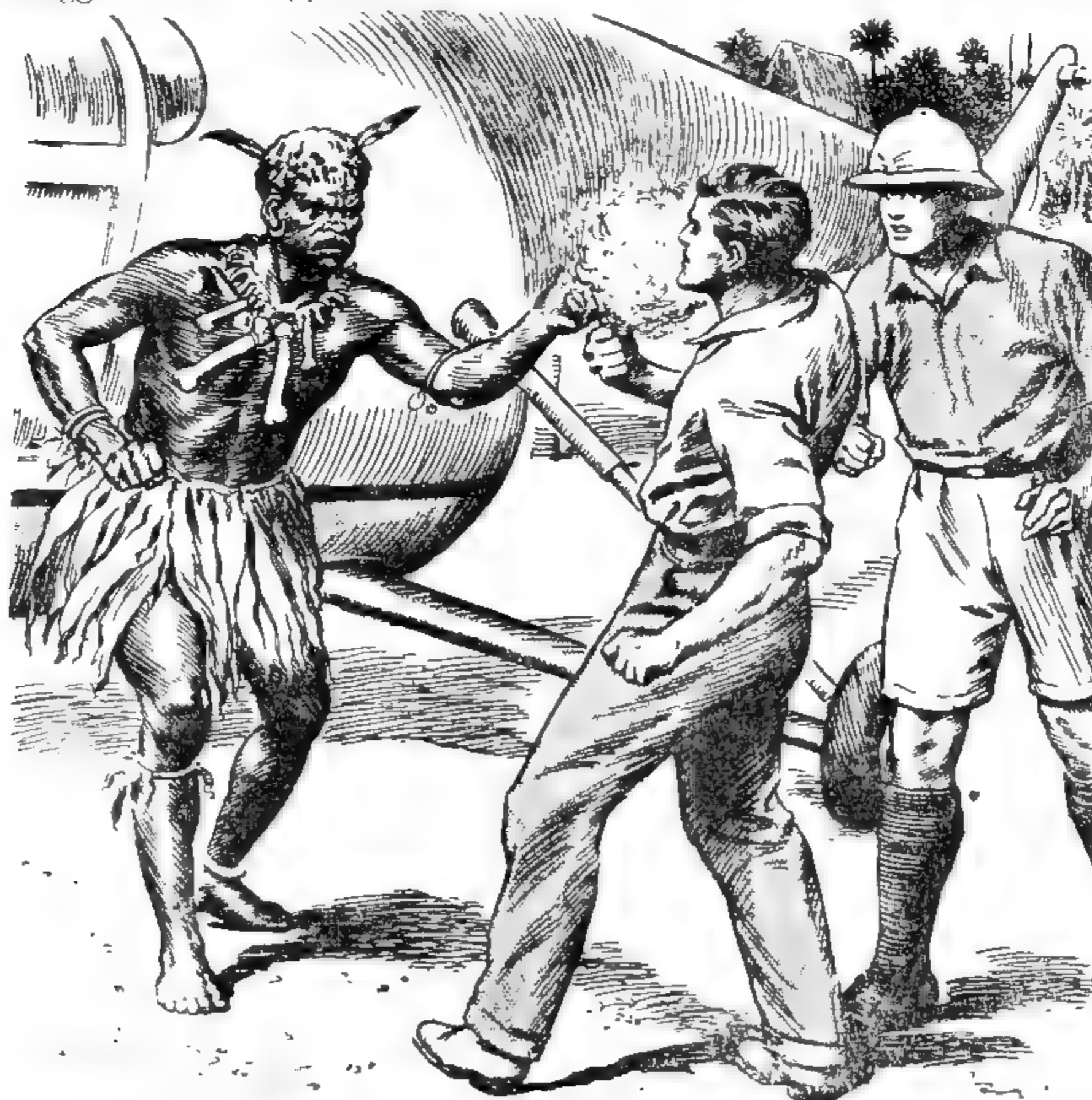
Buzz squared his jaw grimly.

"Young Bobo is a smart lad. He's been kidnapped. But he was cute enough to manage to send this message adrift on the river, hoping that someone would see it."

Jan's eyes grew round with terror.

"Boss, I told you once before, Skull-Pole Valley is a bad place. Dangerous. A place of death for strangers!"

"All the more reason why we should get Bobo out with-



"You cunning demon!" cried Buzz. "You were trying to tamper with this machine so that I'd crash!" Sarja's reply was to hurl a handful of dust into Buzz's face!

out wasting any more time," snapped Buzz. "Come on. Let's go."

PERIL IN SKULL-POLE VALLEY

IT wasn't long before the helicopter, racing across the tree-tops, was hovering above Skull-Pole Valley.

In the middle of it was a village built on a clearing near the river bank, with a circle of thatched huts with beehive-shaped roofs. The central roof-pole of every hut was ornamented with a human skull!

As the helicopter rattled down into the clearing men swarmed from all directions. They were savage, hideously painted men, armed to the teeth with throwing spears, knives and arrows.

Jan was quivering with fear, and for a moment even Buzz felt uneasy as the sullen, hostile throng closed menacingly round the helicopter.

Buzz pulled himself together. There was only one way to deal with this mob, and that was to put up a bold front.

He stepped out and stood with his hands on his hips, scowling.

"Where's your Chief?" he demanded. "I want to talk to him."

Then he spotted a familiar figure slinking through the crowd.

"Sarja, you scoundrel! I might have known that you were at the bottom of this. Where's Bobo? Bring him out from wherever you're hiding him, and make it snappy."

The witch-doctor bared his yellow, fang-like teeth in a snarl.

"I know not where ne is. I came this way while searching the jungle, but he is not here."

Buzz glanced at the ground. His eyes narrowed. In the dust he saw some slight but definite traces of bicycle tyre tracks. They did not appear to lead anywhere. They had been scuffed by too many pairs of bare feet. But they told him all he needed to know.

"You lie, Sarja. The boy is here. I mean to find him—if I have to search the whole village."

He moved forward, but at that instant the village Chief stepped to bar his way. Wrinkled, cunning, he looked at Buzz with glittering eyes that were full of menace. He made a swift sign, and a dozen spears came up, their sharp blades pointed at Buzz's chest.

"Go away, white man. Depart in your whirly-bird while you are still safe. We do not welcome strangers here. Especially strangers who make trouble. Look around you. Do you wish to share *their* fate?"

He gestured leeringly at the grinning, bleached skulls on the house poles.

"Please yourself. Will you let me search, or would you rather I called the police?"

"Go fetch them. Let them search. They will find nothing," challenged Sarja.

Buzz turned on his heel.

"All right. You've asked for trouble. Don't blame me for what happens next," he snapped.

For a split second, as he climbed into the helicopter he had to turn his back on the menacing spears. The natives could have sliced him to pieces, but his bold show of nerve daunted them.

Then they had lost the chance. Buzz was back in the helicopter and sending it soaring above the village.

"Are we going for the police, Boss?" asked Jan eagerly.

"A waste of time. A police launch couldn't get up here before late afternoon, and by then they'd have moved Bobo somewhere into the jungle where he would never be found. Or else they would have murdered him."

"You are sure he is here?" questioned Jan.

"Positive. Sarja and that scruffy little Chief are working hand in hand," Buzz declared.

He looked down at the circle of thatched huts

"The boy's down there somewhere, in one of those huts. I'll find him if I have to rip the place apart—and that's just what we're going to do—tear it wide open!"

Jan looked at Buzz in bewilderment, but it didn't take him long to find out what Buzz meant

Buzz grabbed the rope with the hooks on the end, and unwound it through the open cabin door. Then he sent the helicopter charging across the village.

The hooks on the end of the swinging rope dug deep into the thatch of the nearest roof. There was a jerk, a roar, the helicopter staggered and bucked. Then the thatch was flying in great chunks as the hooks ripped a hole in the roof, so that Buzz could see inside

The hut was empty.

Buzz roared on to the next. The flailing hooks cleared half the roof in one sweep

Screams rose from the enraged natives. The Chief yelled frantic orders. By the time that Buzz had torn a gaping hole in the roof of a third hut the warriors were climbing like monkeys into the tall trees that surrounded the compound.

Buzz deftly piloted the helicopter at another roof

Suddenly the air was filled with a bird-like twittering. The sound was made by arrows, coming at the helicopter in all directions from the men in the trees.

Warrrrrrrrh!

Then the rope tightened. The helicopter roared. The roof came up like the lid off a box.

"Boss! There he is! Bobo!" cried Jan

Buzz stared down into the roofless hut. Bobo

was crouching by the wall. A fresh flight of arrows rattled against the helicopter as Buzz allowed it to drop straight down, with the rope still trailing.

Bobo guessed his intention in a flash. He leaped for the rope and began to swarm up it.

At a screeched command from their Chief the warriors rushed towards the hut and burst the barred door down, determined to prevent Bobo's escape.

"It's going to be touch and go, but I think we'll just do it," gasped Buzz.

Then to his dismay, Bobo let go the rope and dropped back to the floor of the hut.

"What the—?" began Buzz.

Then he saw. Bobo had gone back for his bicycle! Swiftly the native lad fixed the hooks under the frame and then leapt on to the saddle.

"Jan! Quick, pull him up!" yelled Buzz.

The hut door burst open. Through the open roof Buzz saw the warriors rush into the hut just as Bobo was whipped clear. They made wild leaps for his dangling legs—missing him by inches as he soared up and away through the roof.

Another shower of arrows clunked against the helicopter as Jan pulled furiously on the rope.

Meanwhile, back in Bobo's home village, Steve Barlow was conducting his open-air village school just as he had always done—just as if this was no different from any other morning.

But his heart wasn't in it, he hardly knew what he was teaching, and none of his glum-faced pupils were listening to a word he was saying.

Then, all at once, one keen-eared lad jumped to his feet

"I hear the whirlybird! Perhaps it brings news!"

The helicopter came chugging in over the tree-tops. And suspended below it, still seated on his bicycle, was Bobo!

"The whirlybird has brought Bobo! Bobo is back!"

The compound echoed to shrieks and yells. Everyone was going frantic with excitement.

The Chief came striding out of his hut with a look of wonder on his face, then rushed to his rescued son



Buzz stared grimly at the S.O.S. on the toy yacht's sail. A kidnapped boy was being held in a valley inhabited by ruthless savages. How could the daring pilot bring off a rescue?

Buzz set Bobo on the ground, then followed him down in the helicopter. Buzz had to fight his way through a dancing, clapping throng to reach Steve and the delighted Chief.

It didn't take him long to explain what had happened.

"Of course, it was Sarja's idea. He hates us because we have destroyed his power, and he hoped to get rid of us. The plot misfired, and I guess we've seen the last of him. He won't dare show his face in this village again."

"Tuan Buzz, how can I ever thank you—" began the thunderstruck Chief.

"Don't thank me. It was all Bobo's doing. If he hadn't been smart enough to steal a march on his captors and get that boat into the water we'd never have found him," declared Buzz. "And by the way—"

He climbed back into the helicopter and returned with the boat, which he presented to Bobo.

"I guess you'll never want to part with this again."

"Yes, it is very nice," agreed Bobo with a beaming smile. "But the next time I win a prize, please, I too would like a whirlybird."

THE END



Treasure Hunters

Centuries ago the galleons of mighty Spain set out from the Americas, their holds crammed with gold and precious stones looted from conquered people. But often these treasure-laden ships never reached the Spanish shore. Ruthless pirates and storms took their toll—and countless vessels sank with their costly cargoes.



Today there are men who spend their lives searching for the treasure ships of old that now lie rotting on the sea-bed. Such a perilous job calls for special skill, expensive equipment, and iron nerve. Here we see an ocean-explorer in a suit designed to operate at 100 feet below the surface.

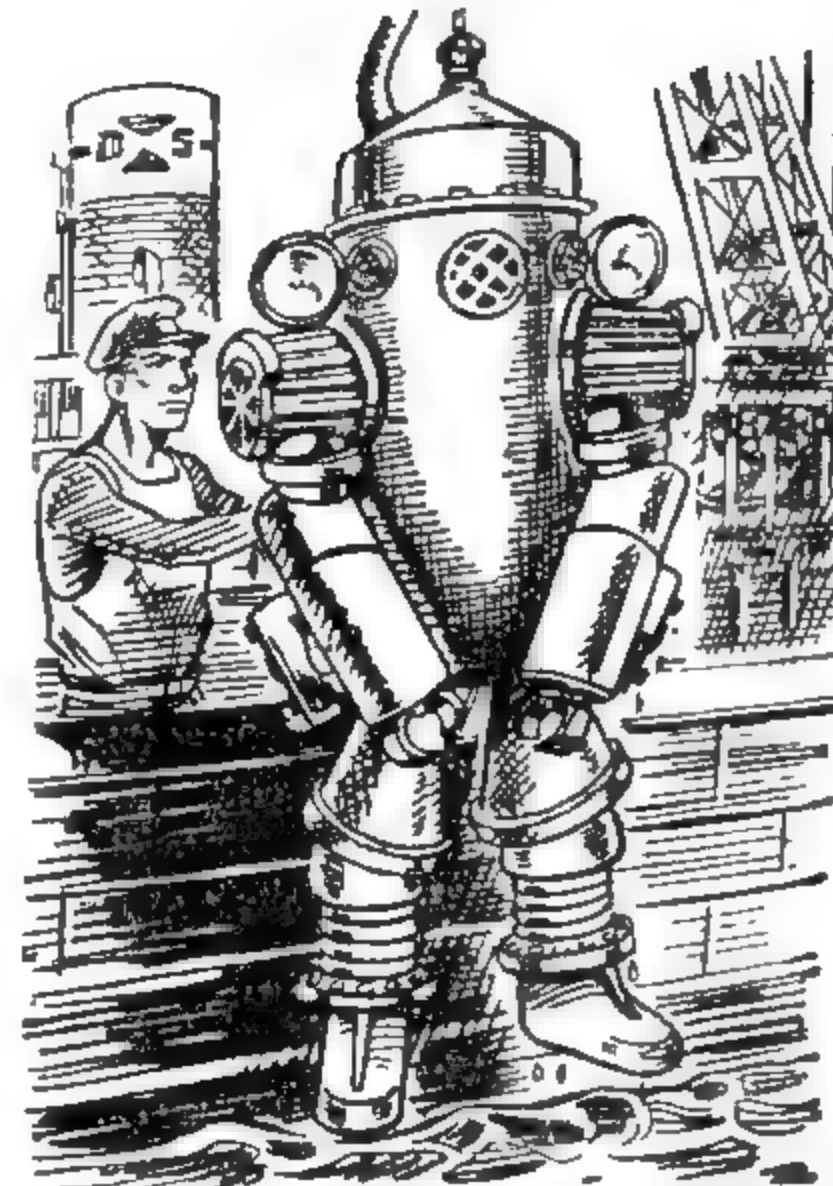


Many and varied are the hazards that threaten the diver on the ocean floor—from grappling with an 8-armed octopus that has made its home in a hulk, to freeing his precious air-line when it has become dangerously entangled in wreckage.



The deeper a diver has to go, the stronger his suit must be. Water-pressure plus the weight of his "clothes" forces him to walk in slow-motion. This man is wearing a suit with spring-loaded trousers. These enable him to make comparatively quick progress.

OF THE OCEAN DEPTHS

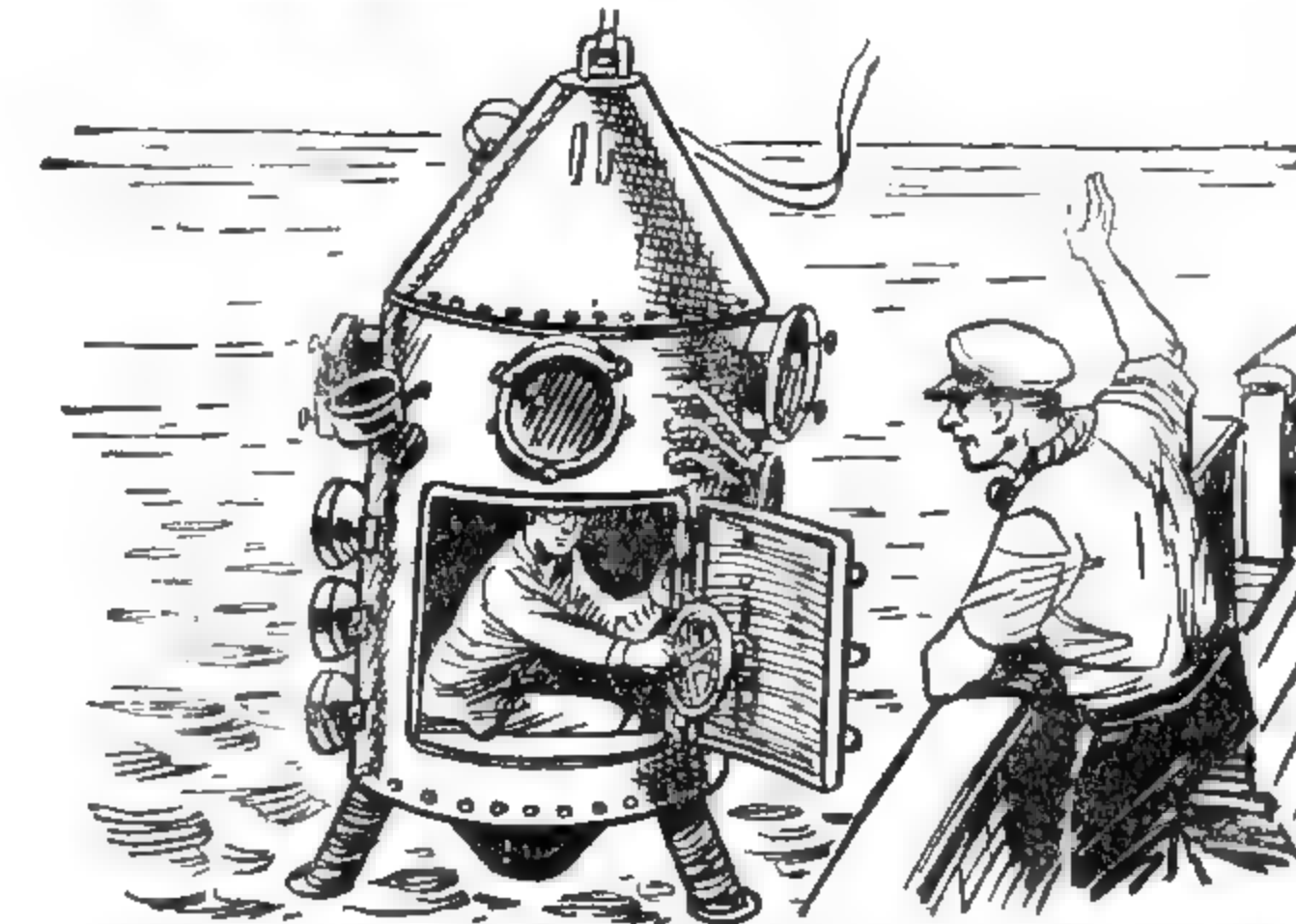
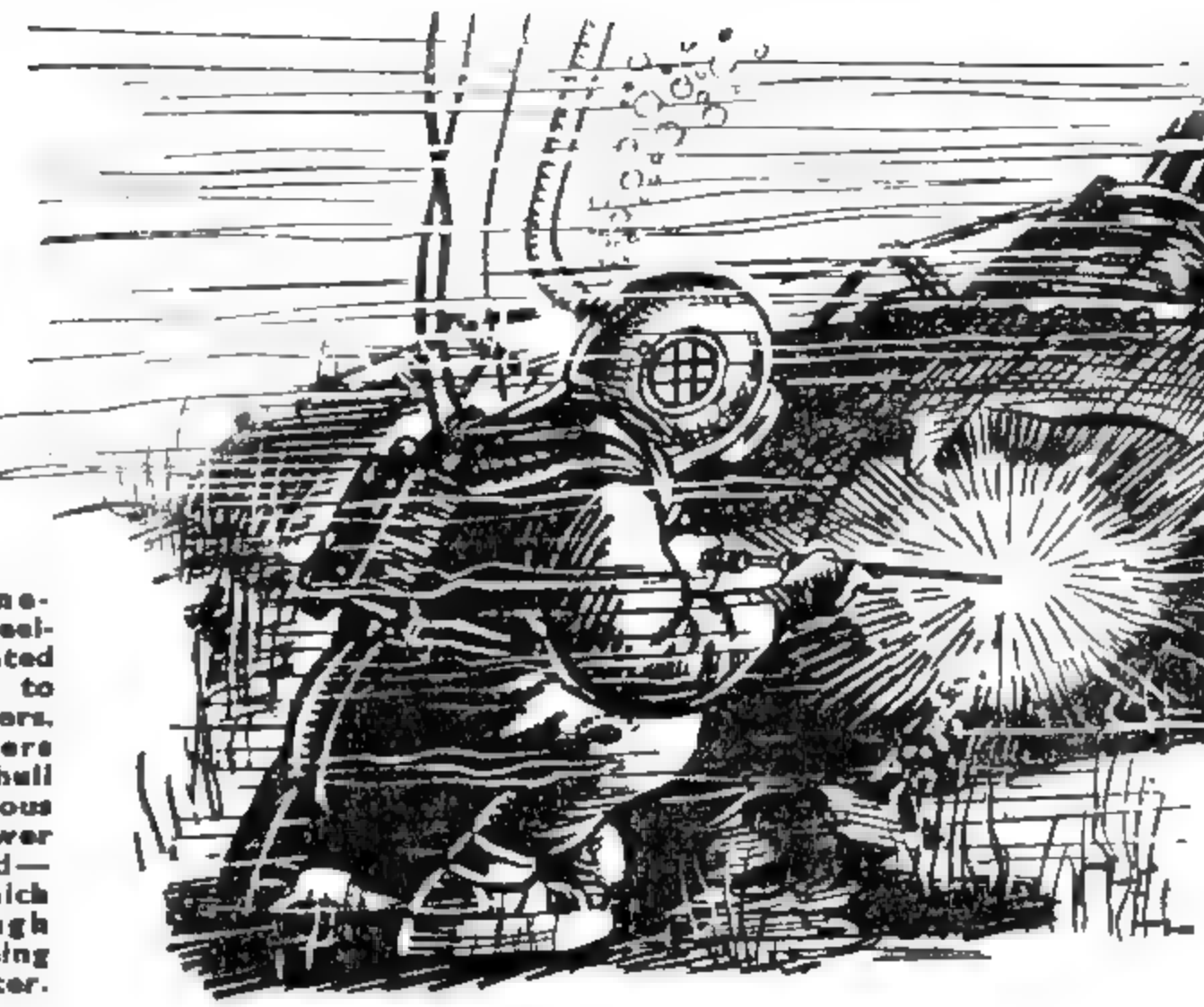


The suit shown here makes its wearer look like a robot. But it is "just the job" for great depths where the water pressure is tremendous. Note the side-lamps fitted above the shoulders.



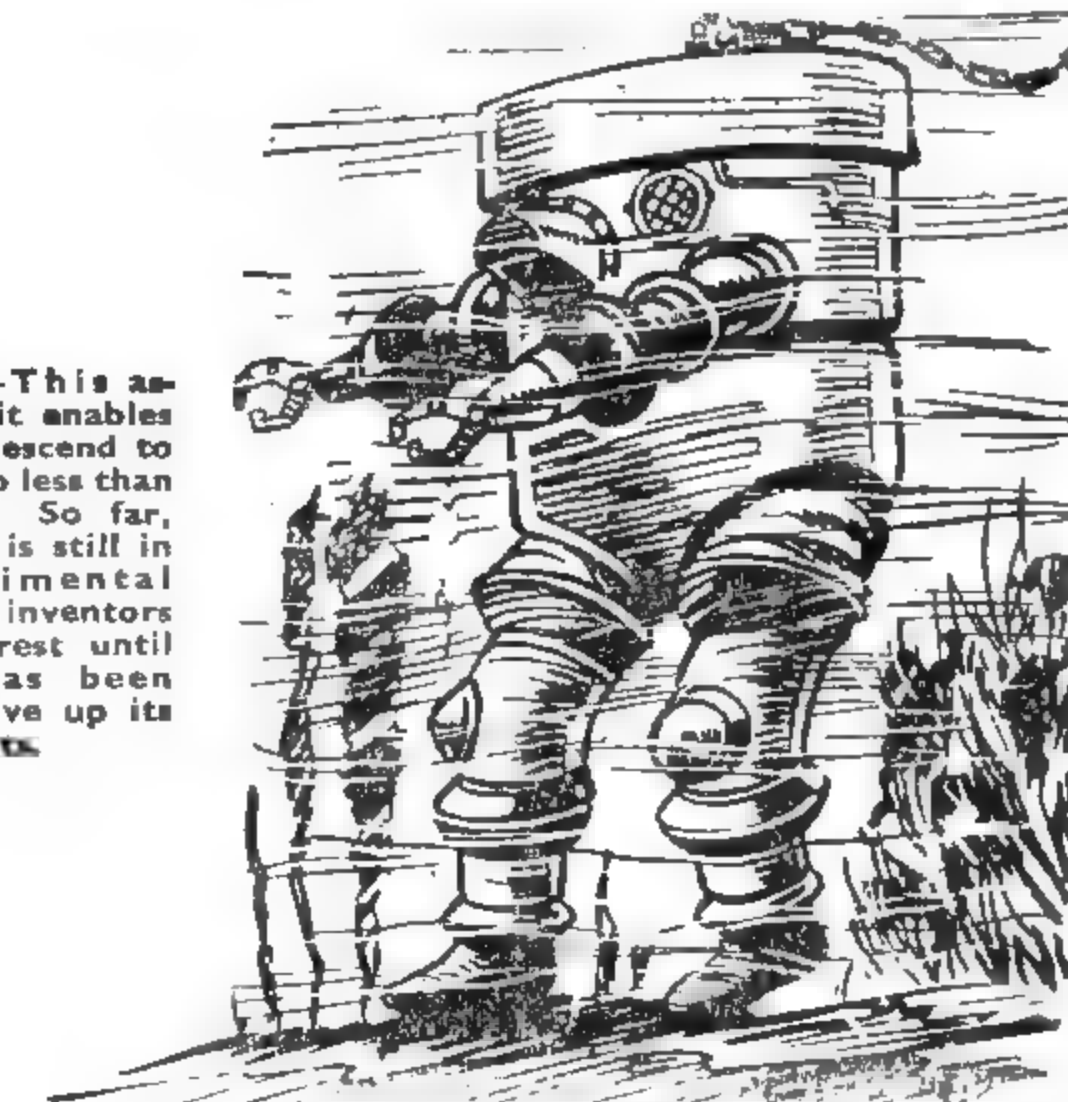
The wrecks that have yielded the largest amount of treasure weren't Spanish galleons—but British merchantmen sunk by the enemy during World War I. Millions of pounds' worth of gold has been recovered by salvage workers.

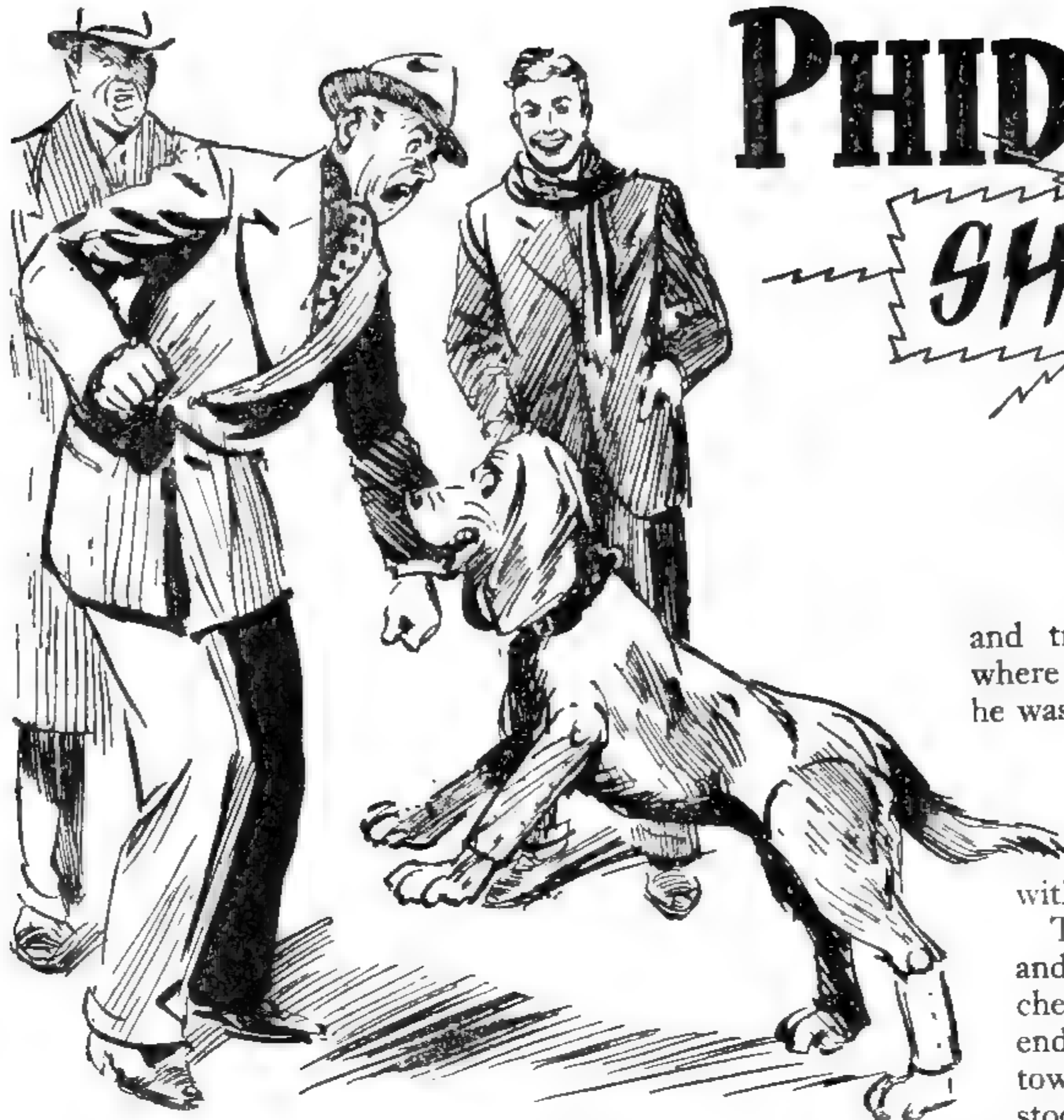
(Right).—Fortune-filled wrecks of steel-made ships presented a tricky problem to the sea-bed searchers. How could divers hack through the hull to reach the precious cargo? The answer was soon found—flame-cutters, which can slice through metal despite being immersed in water.



About to be lowered into the water is a diving-bell. It holds several people, and is fitted with large windows and powerful head-lamps. From it photographs of a wreck can be taken—a great aid to the divers who follow.

(Right).—This astounding suit enables a diver to descend to a depth of no less than 1,000 feet! So far, however, it is still in its experimental stage. But inventors will never rest until the sea has been forced to give up its secrets.





PHIDO WAS A SHOCKER!

By Victor Norman

and trailing criminals by scent, even where normal bloodhounds failed. And he was tracking a criminal now.

A man involved in a bank robbery had shot the branch manager and escaped, leaving as a clue only a handkerchief with no laundry mark.

That had been enough for Phido, and now, as rumbling noises in his chest told, he was getting near the end of the hunt, and steering Fred towards a bus stop where three men stood.

"By gosh! The crook must be one of those three!" Fred muttered.

He halted the dog by breathing a word into the hand mike attached to the lead.

The situation was tricky. There were no police near, and Professor Stanton Wyx, the genius who had designed the wonder automaton, was still at the scene of the crime looking for other clues. He had entrusted Fred, his student assistant, with the task of trailing the runaway with Phido, the automatic sleuth.

And the rogue was one of these three men, if Phido hadn't blundered!

Phido did not blunder often except when the Professor forgot to recharge him, made a faulty adjustment, or absent-mindedly short-circuited him.

Fred halted Phido because he didn't want to have the wrong man seized. Phido's electro-magnetic jaws were capable of applying a crocodile grip from which escape was impossible, and unless he was skilfully directed he was as ready to bite a cop as a gangster.

"Phido, this is the test," warned Fred. "You're on trial, chum, and you've got to behave like a real dog, or the crook may suspect what you are."

MISSING—ONE MECHANICAL DOG!

FRED Forbes strode excitedly along the pavement of the busy London street, holding tightly to the leash of Phido, his Electronic Bloodhound.

At first glance no one would have gussed that Phido was not a real dog but a scientific wonder. An automaton! His snuffling; his nose-to-the-ground shambling; his lolloping gait; his fur; the way the loose folds crinkled over his sagging eyes; his long swinging ears—everything about him seemed to be perfectly genuine.

But Phido was, in fact, just a box of scientific tricks; one of the latest wonders that was more remarkable than all the seven wonders of the ancient world put together.

Behind Phido's eyes were concealed small cameras capable of taking motion pictures, close-ups, or stills; his ears held tiny microphones which recorded on magnetic tape reels that were hidden in his massive chest. He could run at a command given to the hand microphone that Fred held, and he could be halted; turned; made to sit up and scratch his ear with baffling realism; bark, bite and jump.

But Phido's greatest gift was his power of tracking

Bank-Robbers Beware—When there's an Electronic Bloodhound on the Trail!

For, although news of this super robot dog had been kept out of the newspapers, Fred knew that some wind of it had spread in the underworld. So, to avoid raising the men's suspicions, Fred set Phido's tail wagging.

Then he set the control to "bark-moderate."

"Woof, woof!" went Phido. "Woof, woof!"

The men at the bus stop turned, and Fred set Phido shuffling forward with the usual swinging gait of a bloodhound.

All three men looked equally annoyed.

"Keep that dog away," rapped a fat man with a red face.

"What do you think we are—crooks?" snorted a thin man with glittering eyes and a beard.

"Snuffle, snuffle!" went Phido.

The third man had a hatchet face and big, built-up shoulders.

"Chasing an escaped convict, son?" he asked. "Or is this your own doggy pal?"

"Just my doggy pal," said Fred, and, directing Phido's head at the men in turn, took photographs with Phido's artful eyes.

"What extraordinary eyes the dog has. Are they glass ones?" asked the red-faced man, staring at Phido, who began to snuffle at him keenly.

"Get away," rapped the man, and Phido sniffed at the others. As he got the scent of the man with the red face, his tail wagged at terrific speed.

"Seems to know you sir," said Fred, and watched the man's face intently.

"If that dog will obey you, order him off," rapped the man.

"Here, Phido boy. Sit," said Fred, and the mechanical hound promptly sat.

"If you tell it to run, will it do so?" asked the man with a red face.

"It will," said Fred. "But our bus is coming now."

Fred gave the red-faced third man a very quick look. Judging by Phido's behaviour this was the one who rang the bell, or rather made the tail wag. Fred

telt sure that he was the crook, but he could not be sure enough yet to order Phido to seize the man. He must trail him further.

"Here's your bus if the conductor will let you on it," said the third man.

"After you," said Fred.

"It's not the one I want, son," said red-face.

As the two other men got on the bus, Fred smiled grimly.

"And it's not the one I want either," he said.

Red-face changed his mind, however, and made a move to get on the bus. Fred lifted the hand mike to give an order to Phido, and as the third man stepped on to the platform, Fred called "up."

As he snapped the word, Phido jumped up to the platform.

"Turn left," called Fred.

The faithful electronic dog turned left and stalked into the bus. Fred jumped on to the bus platform holding the mike at the end of the lead.

What happened then caught Fred completely unprepared. He was quite off his guard as the third man, his suspect, unseen by the conductor, jabbed his elbow into Fred's stomach.



As Fred went to join Phido on the bus platform, the burly bank-robber sent him staggering backwards. The electronic bloodhound was now controlled by the very crooks it had been trailing!

Fred gave a gasp and went momentarily limp; the next moment the mike was wrested from his hand, and a shoulder push sent him staggering from the bus, just as it started.

As Fred tottered back into the roadway, fighting for breath, the artful crook stood so that the conductor couldn't see him, and the bus went on.

By the time Fred had recovered his breath the bus was beyond hailing distance. He had no mike to call to Phido, and even though he had a special radio buzzer with which he could send signals, he dared not use it, for he had no means of telling exactly where Phido was in the bus. To give him orders might be dangerous, for a wrong order might make Phido step from the bus and crash into the roadway.

Fred stood dazed. The crook had stolen more than a march on him! He had also stolen Phido.

Phido, the wonder dog—worth two thousand pounds or more—was in the hands of the very crook he was intended to catch.

Fred pulled himself together. He could not face Professor Stanton Wyx without Phido. And he didn't mean to be beaten.

There was one gleam of hope. Although the crook had Phido he couldn't make him work—for he didn't know the wonderful things the dog could do, or how to make him do them.

Unless the crook managed to order Phido off the bus to destruction, Fred might still get the better of him.

As he saw a car coming, Fred sprang into the road and desperately waved it to a standstill. He showed Professor Wyx's card to the driver, explained that he was the Professor's assistant, and then convinced the man that it was most urgent that he should overtake the bus.

"O.K. son," said the driver, giving Fred the benefit of any doubt. "Nip inside. We'll soon catch up with the bus."

He stepped on the gas, and they overtook the bus in less than half a mile.

When they saw it, it was at the roadside with a small crowd gathered round the entrance platform. In the middle of the crowd was a policeman and the conductor, and Fred gritted his teeth.

"There's been an accident, I bet," he muttered. "That crook must have made Phido jump from the car. Stop please," he asked the car driver.

The car swept into the kerb beside the halted bus, and Fred sprang out.

A SHOCK FOR THE CONDUCTOR

AS soon as Fred jumped from the car he heard Phido's howl.

"There's the boy," shouted the conductor, pointing to Fred. "He's the lad I saw with this dog—if you can call it a dog?"

"Where is he? Where's Phido?" rapped Fred in alarm, but even as he spoke he heard Phido's howl again. It came from inside the bus.

"If that's your dog, stop it howling," said the conductor. "I can't get near it. There were two men with it, and they gave it orders. Then they got off and it howled like mad, and it's been howling ever since."

Fred hurried into the bus. Phido stood facing the front end of the inside of the bus, howling.

"Yow-w-w-w-w! Wowoowowowowo!"

Fred seized the mike. He pushed the right button, gave Phido an order, and brought the howling to an end.

"Good old Phido," he muttered.

He looked the dog over, and the worst of his fears vanished. So far as he could tell, the wonder dog was none the worse for his adventure.

But the crook had escaped. If he had intended to smash the dog he had failed; but at any rate, he had gone.

Fred backed Phido from the bus, only to be accosted by the policeman and the conductor.

"Now, young 'un," said the policeman, who had a lean face, keen eyes, and was not the type to stand any nonsense. "First—is this your dog?"

"It's my employer's dog," said Fred guardedly.

"Huh? And has he a licence for him, I wonder?"

"No," said Fred, and added softly: "He's not really a dog."

"Not really a dog?" said the conductor. "What is he then? An outsize cat, or an undersized elephant? Of course he's a dog. I heard him howl, and I know a dog's howl when I hear one." He gave Phido a closer look, and added doubtfully: "Actually he does seem a bit mechanical. This is the first proper look I've had at him."

He stroked his chin, looking puzzled, and there were murmurs from the crowd as others noticed Phido's odd fixed look, and manner of standing.

Fred furtively showed Professor Stanton's Wyx's card to the policeman. The policeman stiffened and his eyes shot up.

"Phewww! I've heard of that dog," he said in wonder. "So this is him?"

Fred nodded.

"This is him," he said, "so least said, soonest mended. I'm on the track of a crook."

The policeman looked at him measuringly.

"Can you give me proof that this is the Professor's dog?" he asked in an undertone.

"Well, if you pat him, he'll give you an electric shock," said Fred.

That had been arranged by the Professor to prevent Phido being damaged by too many strangers patting him and upsetting some of his delicate mechanism.



"Yow-ow!" yelled the bus conductor when he patted the "bloodhound" on its electrically-charged head. He'd discovered what a "shocking" dog Phido was!

Before the policeman could pat Phido, however, the conductor intervened.

"Huh! Electric shock from patting a dog? Never heard such tosh," he said, stretching out his hand to give Phido a pat.

"Yow-ow ahaha . . . oo!" he yelled the next moment, and leaped three feet in the air before he started wagging his hand and arm, and skipping from one foot to the other.

"Call that funny?" he demanded in wrath. "Nearly shocked my arm off."

Fred looked at the policeman, who was now grinning.

"O.K." said the constable, and Fred, without waiting for further comments, gave Phido his marching orders and hurried off.

He set Phido on his old scent again, and Phido led the way, straining at the lead.

Phido led the way round the corner into a street where there were tall, gaunt houses. It had once been an expensive residential area; but the property had long been neglected. The houses were now used as offices and or let out into flats or rooms.

Outside the third house from the left, Phido

halted, his tail wagging. He gave a low, whining sound. Before he could mount the steps, he needed another order.

"Wait, boy," commanded Fred.

He had to be careful. It wouldn't do to barge into the large house by himself, even though the front door stood open.

Because the house was used for offices, the main door was open, and anyone could walk in without questions being asked. But this might be a trap.

The crook might have gone inside only with the purpose of getting Fred to follow him. Fred remembered that the conductor had said there were two men in the bus, so it was possible that the man had a pal with him.

Fred wanted to bring off a capture unaided by the Professor, but he had been warned against acting too much on his own, or taking too much into his own hands.

He certainly didn't want to lose his job, nor did he want to take unnecessarily the risk of being bashed on the head and stunned by a crook—quite apart from the risk of something happening to Phido.

Fred, after a quick reflection, moderated Phido's control. He switched him off his scent, and put his "signals" to "right ahead," as it were.

Phido marched on willingly past the house until they reached the entrance to a mews, in which there were garages on either side. There were one or two cars parked in the mews, but the only men in sight were at the far end, where they were looking into a car's bonnet.

Fred halted Phido. It was as quiet a spot as he could find near here.

"Now, Phido, old pal," said Fred softly. "I wonder if you heard anything those men said? Your listening gear is switched on."

Fred often spoke to Phido as if he were a real dog. It helped to keep up appearances, but that was not the only reason. He had quite an affection for this piece of apparatus, and at times almost felt that it had some kind of personality.

Switching on the "play back" with low volume, Fred listened intently. Anything that Phido had heard would be recorded on his magnetic tape and would play it back faithfully.

Fred listened and gasped—even though he had expected to hear a faithful recording. It was his own voice he heard. He heard the gasp he had given as he was pushed off the bus, then the roar of the engine as the bus had moved off.

After that he heard the crook's voice telling Phido to "stop" and "sit down" inside the bus. But now another voice chimed in, more husky and lower in tone. Another man had talked to the crook.

"Let the thing alone. It'll go on to the end of the journey, or else if it tries to follow us it'll get smashed. We don't want to get involved with it and get asked questions."

"O.K. mate," agreed the man who had pushed Fred off the bus.

His confederate went on talking.

"Get this straight. We're calling on the Chief in five minutes time. He may not be home. If he isn't the whole lot of us are meeting at Maloney's in the red room at half-past twelve. That O.K.?"

"O.K." was the answer. "Well, this is where we get off the bus and lose this dog."

Fred nearly yelped with excitement. Phido had overheard the crook's plans. They were meeting at Maloney's, a restaurant, at twelve-thirty. But they would find the police waiting!

All Fred had to do now was to tell Professor Stanton Wyx.

Suddenly, almost as soon as Fred switched Phido off the "playback" mechanism, the dog gave an excited whine, and his tail wagged.

"Why—that means——" gasped Fred in amazement.

His amazement changed to alarm. For that whine and tail-wag meant that the quarry Phido was seeking was now close to him!

WHEN PHIDO CAME BACK TO LIFE

FRED wheeled and nearly flopped. "Gosh," he gasped.

Coming towards him, hat well down partly covering his eyes, and coat collar turned up, was the crook he had called the third man at the bus stop—the one who had pushed him from the bus.

"Got you!" said the man through his teeth, and he held his overcoat pocket forward as though it concealed a gun.

Following him down into the mews came a car which stopped close to them. The driver of it reached over and opened the near rear door.

"Come on, both of you," rapped the crook to Fred. "You and that mechanical monstrosity of an imitation dog, too."

Fred's momentary alarm went, and his head cleared. He knew he had to think swiftly, and not only that. He had also to act like a flash. This was no time for fluffing or panic, for he could not fight the crooks single-handed, especially if they were armed.

One man came towards Fred, menacingly.

"I'll soon put paid to that dog all right," he gritted.

"Don't be a fool!" rasped the other. "We'll take the dog. It's worth a fortune."

Fred suddenly acted. He reached out his hand to Phido's collar where the secret main switch was, and turned it off.

To the blank amazement of the crooks the automaton gave a sigh and settled down. Its legs slid out and it touched ground and rolled over.

The men muttered and stared.

"Lift him into the car," snapped one.

This was what Fred wanted.

"You'll have to get a grip on the collar," he said. "He's heavy."

"I'll get a grip on his collar all right," jeered the crook, and grasped Phido's collar.

But that collar, when pulled, switched Phido on and made him really savage-like a tiger roused from sleep.

"Gr-r-r-r!" he snarled and gripped the man's sleeve with his vice-like jaws.

"Ah-owowowow!" howled the man. "Ooo! Make him leggo."

"You'd better ask the Professor to do that," said Fred. "The dog was only foxing dead to trap you. My gosh, he's cunning."

The second crook leaped to the rescue; but the noise had attracted the attention of the men at the other end of the mews.

"Keep your trap shut," rapped the second crook, to his pal. Then, like a true crook, he deserted him, and drove off in the car as fast as he could.

Within five minutes the trapped crook was under arrest, and a crowd had gathered. Fred, going to the police station in a taxi with Phido as witness, worked the faithful bloodhound's walkie-talkie and sent out a message to the Professor.

Before he had been at the station ten minutes the Professor arrived in his small racing car. But by then detectives were already on to Maloney's to round up the gang, thanks to Phido's wonderful magnetic tape memory!

"Well done, Fred!" said Professor Stanton Wyx.

"Well done, Phido," grinned Fred, and—forgetting what would happen—gave the electronic bloodhound a rewarding pat.

"Wyowp!" he yelped, skipping in the air. But it was only a mild shock, for as far as his mechanical character permitted, Phido was fond of Fred

THE END

The MYSTERY of the OASIS

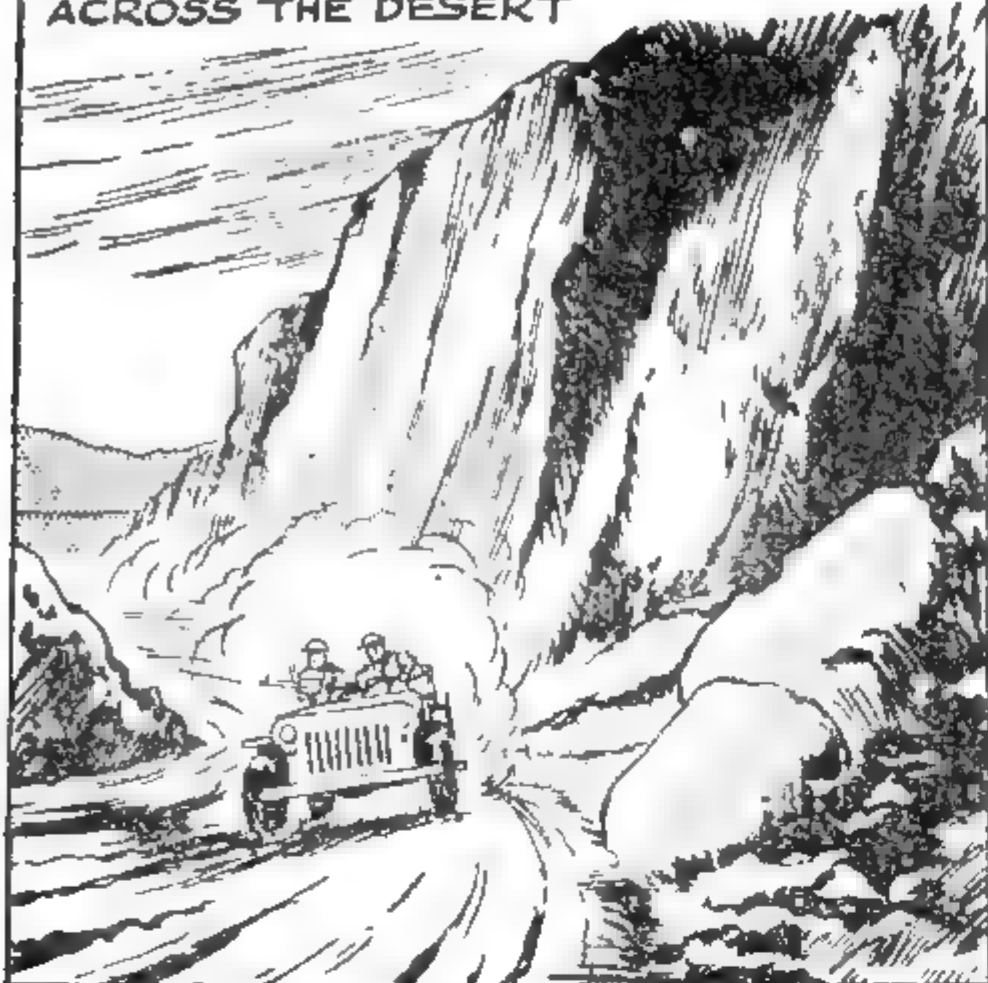
BY
CLIFF
HOOPER



CAREFULLY THE PALS BOUND UP THE ARAB'S WOUND. THEN THEY ASKED HIM WHAT HAD HAPPENED. BUT HE WAS TOO FAR GONE TO SAY MORE. PUZZLED, THEY RETURNED TO THEIR JEEP



THE PALS SPED ACROSS THE ROCKY HEIGHT, UNAWARE OF THE HELIOGRAPH WARNING THAT WAS BEING FLASHED ACROSS THE DESERT



TOPPING ACREST, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THE OASIS

I CAN SEE THE SMOKE OF A CAMP FIRE, JIM. BUT WHERE THE HECK ARE THE ARABS WHO USUALLY HANG AROUND THERE?



THIS IS MIGHTY QUEER. THERE ISN'T A SOUL IN SIGHT. WE'LL PULL UP SHORT OF THE OASIS AND HAVE A PROWL ROUND

NOW LET'S SEE IF WE CAN GET TO THE BOTTOM OF ALL THIS MYSTERY



STEALTHILY THEY CREPT TO THE TOP OF A SAND-DUNE, THEN TUG GAVE A GASP

BY JIMINY--THERE'S BEEN A BATTLE HERE, JIM! JUST LOOK AT THE DAMAGED WEAPONS LYING ABOUT--AND THAT BURNT TENT



THIS IS MORE MYSTERIOUS THAN EVER. WE'D BETTER WATCH OUR STEP

CAUTIOUSLY THEY CIRCLED THE OASIS, NERVES TENSED

THERE ARE VOICES COMING FROM THE SHEIK'S TENT. LET'S TAKE A PEEP UNDER THE BACK OF IT



GREAT SNAKES! WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT?

PHEW! NOW WE KNOW HOW THE ARAB CAME TO BE SHOT. THE CAMP HAS BEEN CAPTURED BY THE NAZIS!



ROPED UP WITHIN THE SHEIK'S GREAT TENT WAS THE ARAB TRIBE - AND THEY WERE GUARDED BY ARMED GERMANS!



THIS IS TREACHERY, O GERMANI. MY PEOPLE HAVE FOUGHT FOR NEITHER SIDE IN THIS DESERT WAR. YET YOU ATTACK US WITHOUT REASON

SILENCE! YOU WILL BE FREED WHEN WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED OUR PURPOSE. BE THANKFUL THAT WE DID NOT SHOOT THE LOT OF YOU

EAGERLY JIM AND TUG WATCHED FROM BENEATH THE TENT FLAP



WHAT'S THE JERRIES' IDEA IN DOING A THING LIKE THIS, JIM?

THAT'S WHAT I MEAN TO FIND OUT. I'LL TRY TO GET TO THE SHEIK WITHOUT BEING SEEN. YOU KEEP WATCH OUTSIDE

HIDDEN FROM THE NAZIS BY THE CAPTURED ARABS, JIM CRAWLED SILENTLY INTO THE TENT. THEN HE SPOKE IN AN URGENT WHISPER



NOT A SOUND, SHEIK! I AM A FRIEND!

THE SHEIK GAVE A START OF AMAZEMENT



BY THE BEARD OF THE PROPHET! AN INGLES!

YES-I'M ENGLISH. WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING HERE?

MY MEN WERE OVERWHELMED BY A LARGE FORCE OF GERMANI, WHO LEFT THIS PARTY TO GUARD US. THE REST TOOK ALL OUR CAMELS AND RODE OFF I KNOW NOT WHERE! ONE OTHER STRANGE THING -



AT THAT MOMENT THERE CAME A STARTLING INTERRUPTION. A GERMAN SENTRY BURST INTO THE TENT!

SERGEANT-MAJOR! A WARNING HAS BEEN FLASHED FROM THE SCOUTS ON THE HILLS. THEY'VE SEEN A BRITISH PATROL IN THIS AREA



BRITISHERS? HIMMEL! OUTSIDE, EVERYONE! SEARCH THE OASIS TO MAKE SURE THAT NONE OF THE ENEMY ARE ALREADY HERE!

HASTILY JIM REJOINED HIS PAL

QUICK, TUG!
WE'VE GOT TO BEAT IT.
THE NAZIS HAVE BEEN
TIPPED OFF ABOUT US.
MAKE FOR THE
JEEP!



EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON
I DON'T KNOW. BUT YOU CAN BET
YOUR BOOTS THE JERRIES HAVEN'T
OCCUPIED THIS OASIS FOR FUN.
THEY MUST HAVE SOME CUNNING
SCHEME AFOOT--AND WE'RE
GOING TO DISCOVER
WHAT IT IS!



ALL AT ONCE A HOARSE YELL RANG OUT.
THE PALS HAD BEEN SPOTTED BY A
NAZI!

ACHTUNG! THE
ENGLANDERS!



AS JIM SWUNG INTO THE DRIVING SEAT OF THE
JEEP, TUG TURNED AND BLAZED AWAY WITH
HIS TOMMY-GUN

HOLD 'EM
OFF WHILE I GET
HER GOING!

TRUST
ME, PAL!



A MOMENT LATER, TUG SPRANG ABOARD, SNATCHED UP
HALF A DOZEN HAND GRENADES, AND FLUNG THEM AT
THE PURSUING ENEMY

SHARE THOSE
BETWEEN YOU, YOU
SQUAREHEADS!

HURRAY!
WE'VE DISHED
THE LOT OF 'EM.
WHAT'S OUR NEXT
MOVE?



AMID A HAIL OF BULLETS, JIM
SENT THE JEEP ROARING INTO
THE DESERT

TO GET TO
OUR OUTPOST AT NE8BI.
THAT'S THE ONLY PLACE
FOR MILES THAT WOULD
INTEREST THE NAZIS. I'VE
A HUNCH THEY MEAN TO
ATTACK IT, USING THE
CAMELS THEY'VE SWIPED
FROM THE TRIBE. SO
WE'VE GOT TO DRIVE
THERE FAST AND
RAISE THE
ALARM!

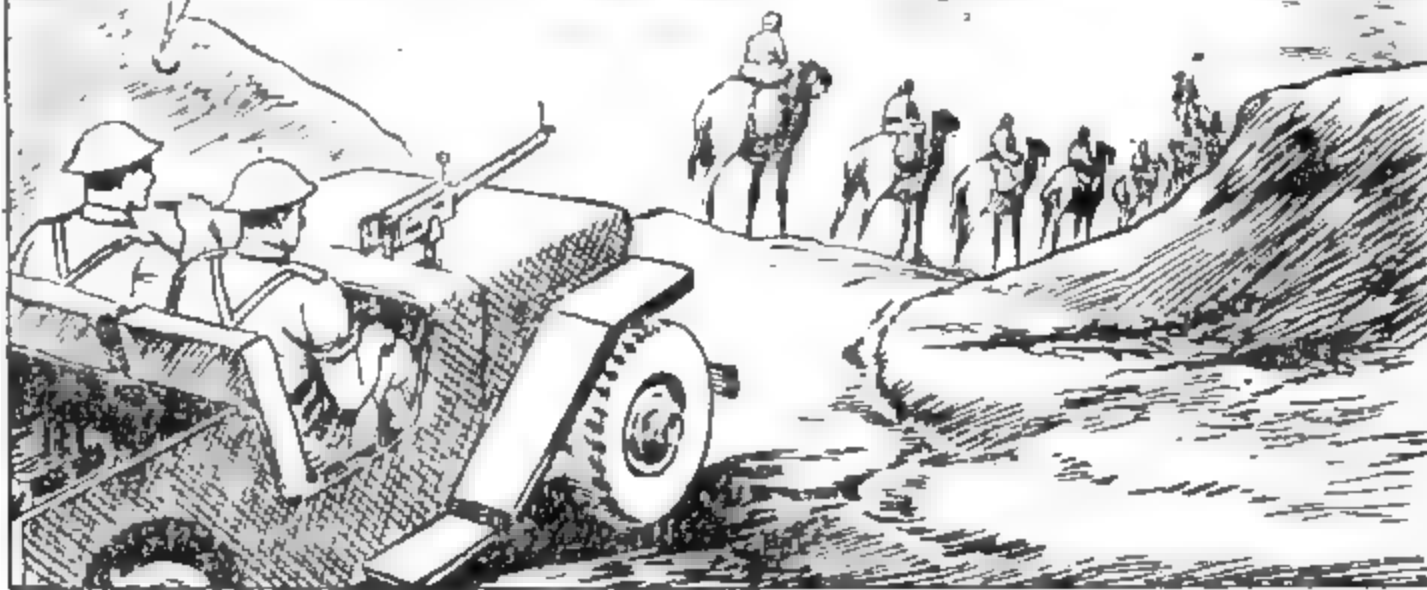


THE BRITISH OUTPOST AT NEBBI HAD MANY TIMES BEEN ATTACKED, BUT ALWAYS THE NAZIS HAD BEEN THROWN BACK. WERE THE ENEMY NOW INTENDING TO MAKE ANOTHER ATTEMPT? IF SO, HOW COULD THE STOLEN CAMELS HELP THEM? AS JIM AND TUG SPED OVER THE HOT SAND, THEY HAD TO CONFESS THAT THE MYSTERY COMPLETELY BAFFLED THEM

AT LAST THE PALS CAME IN SIGHT OF THE OUTPOST

WE'LL REPORT TO CAPTAIN BELL, TUG, AND TELL HIM EXACTLY WHAT'S HAPPENED. HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO

THERE'S AN ARAB CAMEL-TRAIN JUST AHEAD, TAKING FOOD TO THE OUTPOST. WONDER IF THEY'VE SEEN ANYTHING OF THE MAIN NAZI FORCE



AS THE JEEP PASSED THE CAMEL-TRAIN, TUG CALLED OUT TO THE LEADING ARAB

SALAAM! SEEN ANY GERMANI IN THE AREA, CHUM?

NAY, INGLES! NONE!



THE PALS STOPPED AT THE OUTER DEFENCE LINE, AND WITHIN A MINUTE WERE RELATING THEIR ADVENTURES TO CAPT. BELL

YOU'VE DONE WELL, LADS. WE'LL TAKE EXTRA PRECAUTIONS. IF THE NAZIS TRY ANYTHING, WE'LL BE READY FOR 'EM!

OUTPOST



JUST THEN THE CAMEL-TRAIN REACHED THE SPOT

SALAAM, O CAPTAIN, WE BRING DATES AND FOOD—

CARRY ON. YOU KNOW WHERE TO TAKE THEM



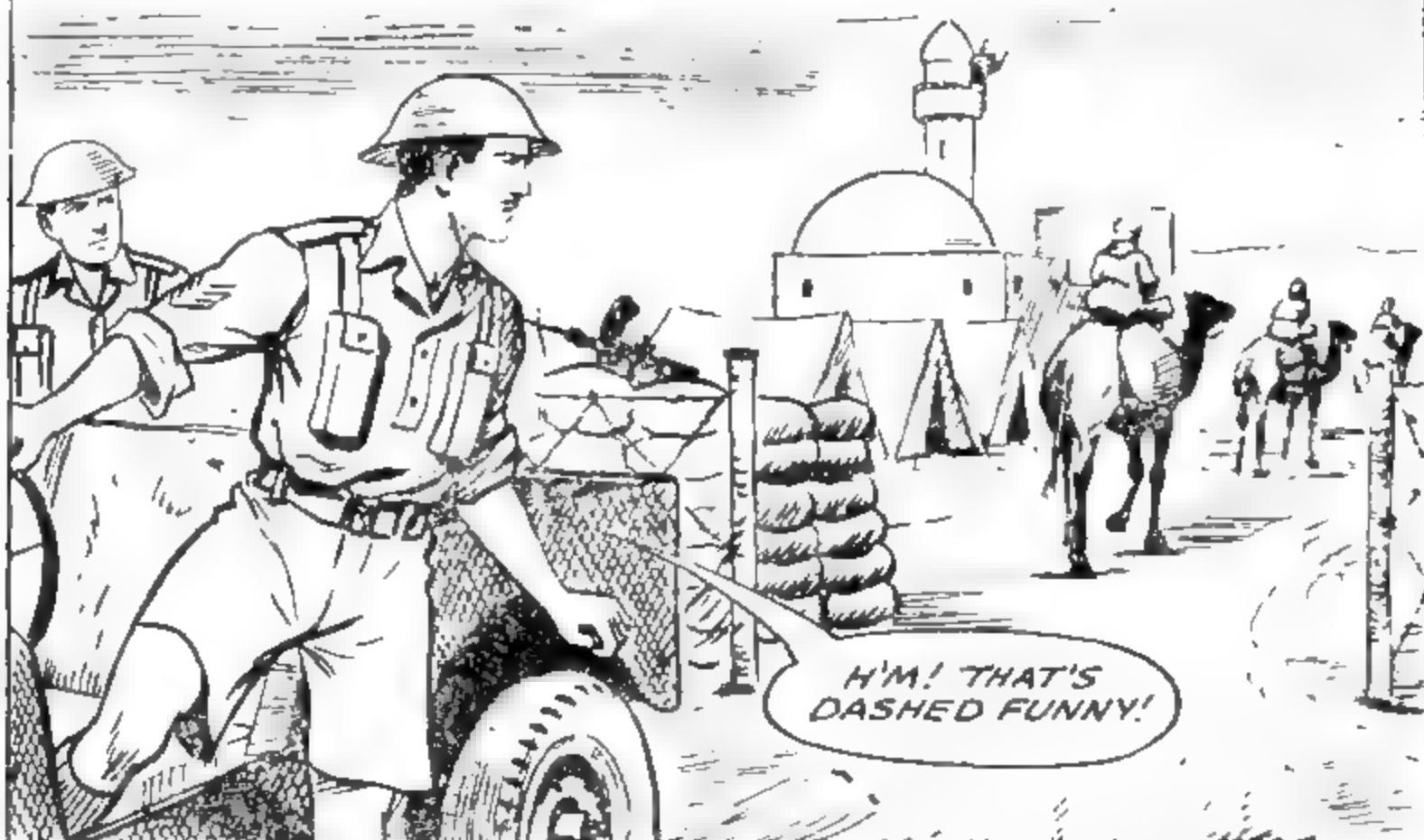
THE CAMELS PASSED THROUGH, AND CAPT. BELL TURNED TO JIM AND TUG

GO BACK A MILE OR SO IN THE DIRECTION OF THE OASIS, AND SEE IF THERE IS ANY FURTHER SIGN OF THE ENEMY. THE LONGER WARNING WE HAVE OF THEIR APPROACH, THE BETTER

VERY GOOD, SIR



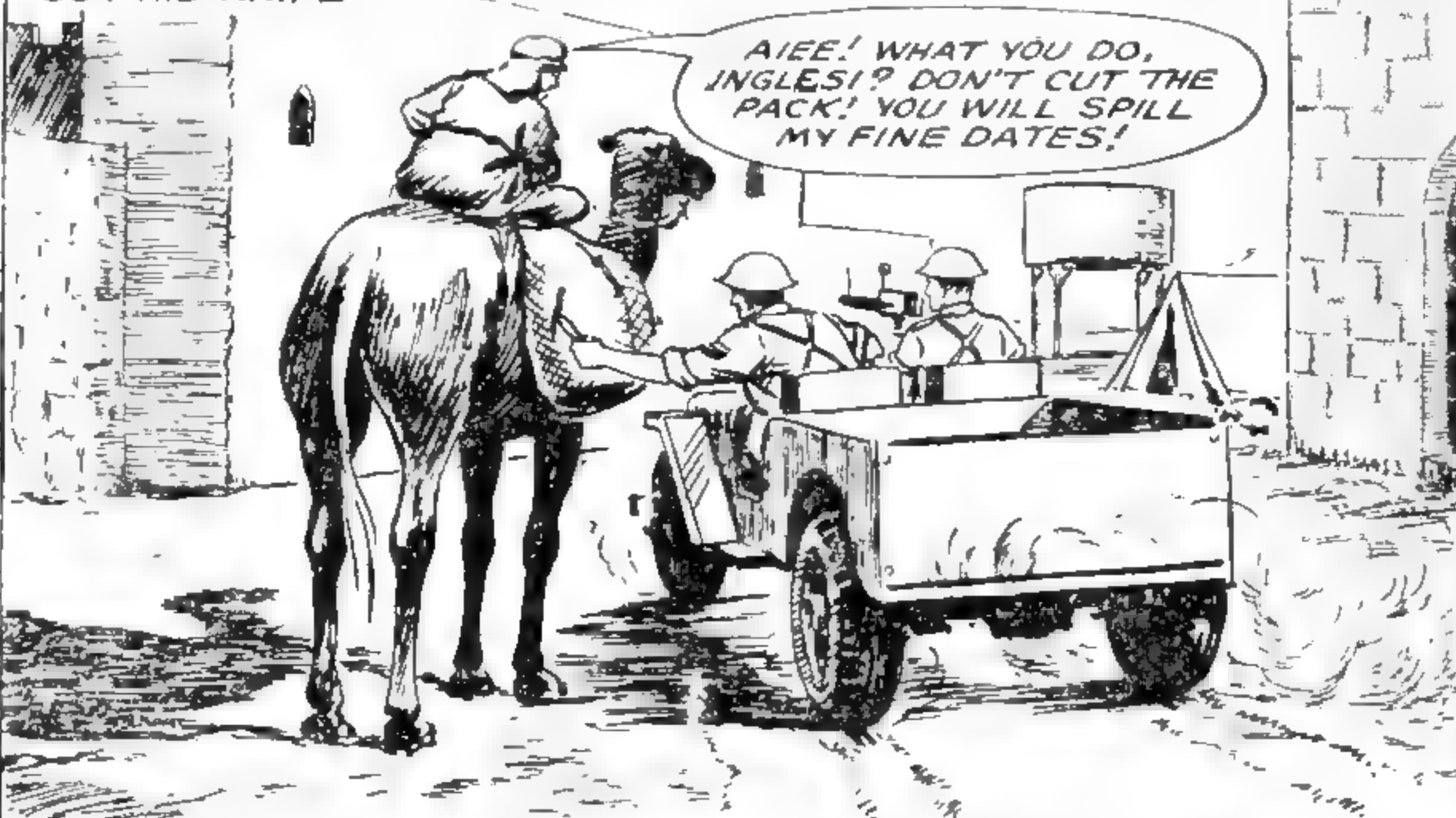
AS THE PALS HURRIED TO THEIR JEEP, THEY HEARD THE CALL OF THE MUEZZIN FROM THE MINARET OF THE NEARBY ARAB VILLAGE. THE NEXT MOMENT, JIM GAVE A GASP



SWINGING THE JEEP THROUGH THE ENTRANCE, HE DROVE AFTER THE STRING OF CAMELS



SLOWING THE JEEP ALONGSIDE THE LEADING CAMEL, JIM DREW OUT HIS KNIFE



JIM SLASHED THE PACK OPEN, HOWEVER-- AND INSTANTLY TUG UTTERED A GASP OF ASTONISHMENT



THEIR TRICK DISCOVERED, THE GERMAN TROOPS FLUNG BACK THEIR BURNOUSES AND SPRANG INTO ACTION

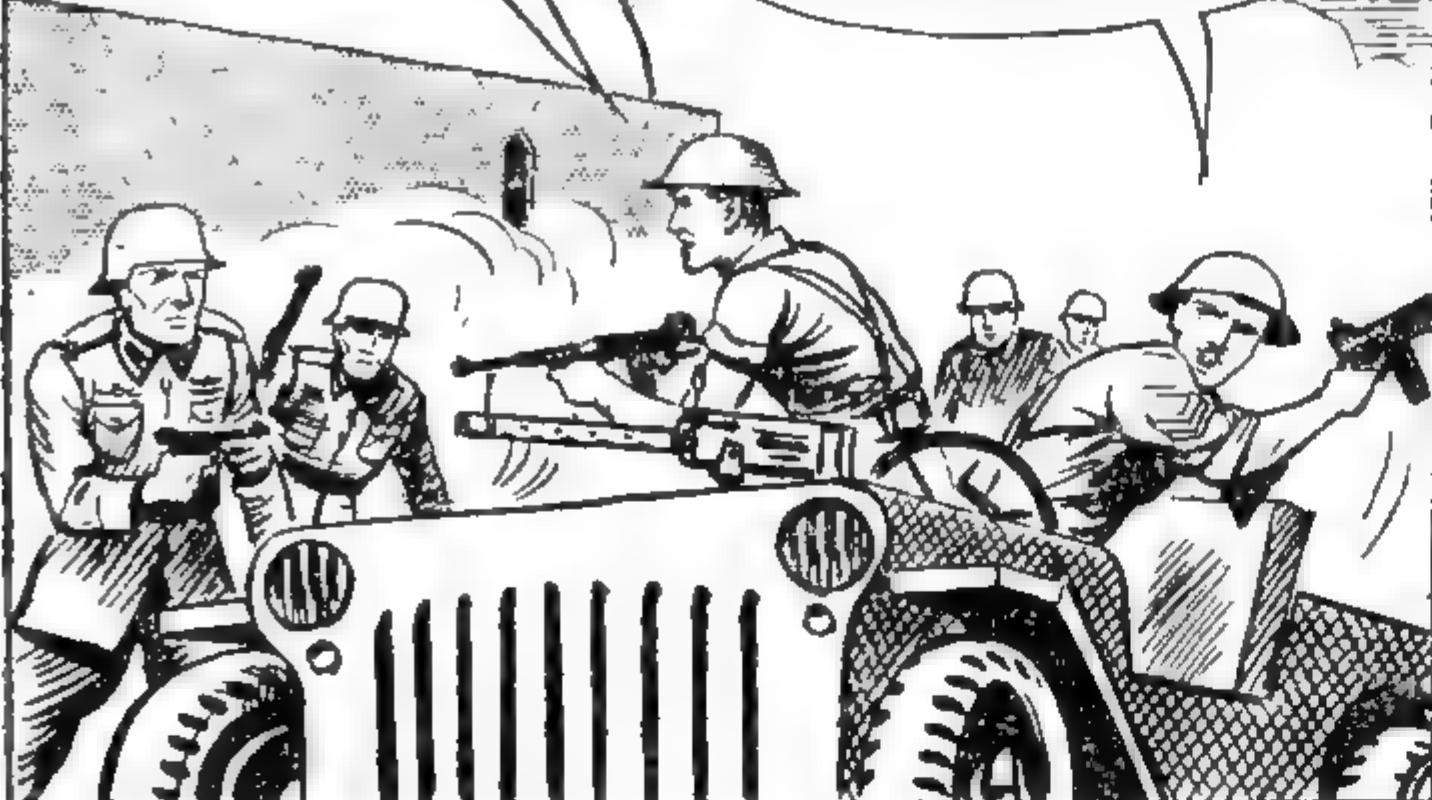


JIM AND TUG AT ONCE REALISED WHY THE NAZIS HAD GONE TO SUCH LENGTHS TO GET THROUGH THE BRITISH LINES. THE WATER SUPPLY FOR THE WHOLE OUTPOST WAS CONTAINED IN THE TOWER. WITHOUT WATER, THE DEFENDERS WOULD QUICKLY HAVE TO SURRENDER--OR DIE OF THIRST!

THE GERMANS FLUNG THEMSELVES AT THE JEEP

HERE THEY COME.
LET 'EM HAVE IT,
JIM

WE'VE GOT TO
STOP THEM DESTROYING
THE WATER-TOWER, OR
THE WHOLE OUTPOST
IS DONE FOR



GRABBING EXPLOSIVES FROM THEIR
CAMEL-PACKS, THE DEMOLITION-PARTY
DASHED TO THE TOWER

HURRY,
FRITZ! WIRE THE
EXPLOSIVES AT THE
TOP OF A GIRDER
JUST BENEATH
THE TANK!



WHILE JIM AND TUG BATTLED FIERCELY WITH THEIR
ATTACKERS, THE EXPLOSIVES WERE PLACED IN
POSITION

EXPLOSIVES
READY FOR FIRING,
HERR LEUTNANT



BACK AT THE OUTER DEFENCES,
CAPT. BELL HAD HEARD THE
SOUND OF FIRING

BY THUNDER,
THOSE SUPPOSED
ARABS ARE JERRIES!
COME ON, MEN!



AT SIGHT OF THE ADVANCING BRITISH TROOPS, THE NAZI
OFFICER BARKED OUT FRESH ORDERS

ACHTUNG! HOLD BACK
THOSE ENGLANDERS UNTIL
THE WATER-TOWER HAS
BEEN DEMOLISHED!



ONE OF THE NAZIS BENEATH
THE WATER-TOWER LIT A
FUSE, THEN SCRAMBLED
DOWN TO THE GROUND

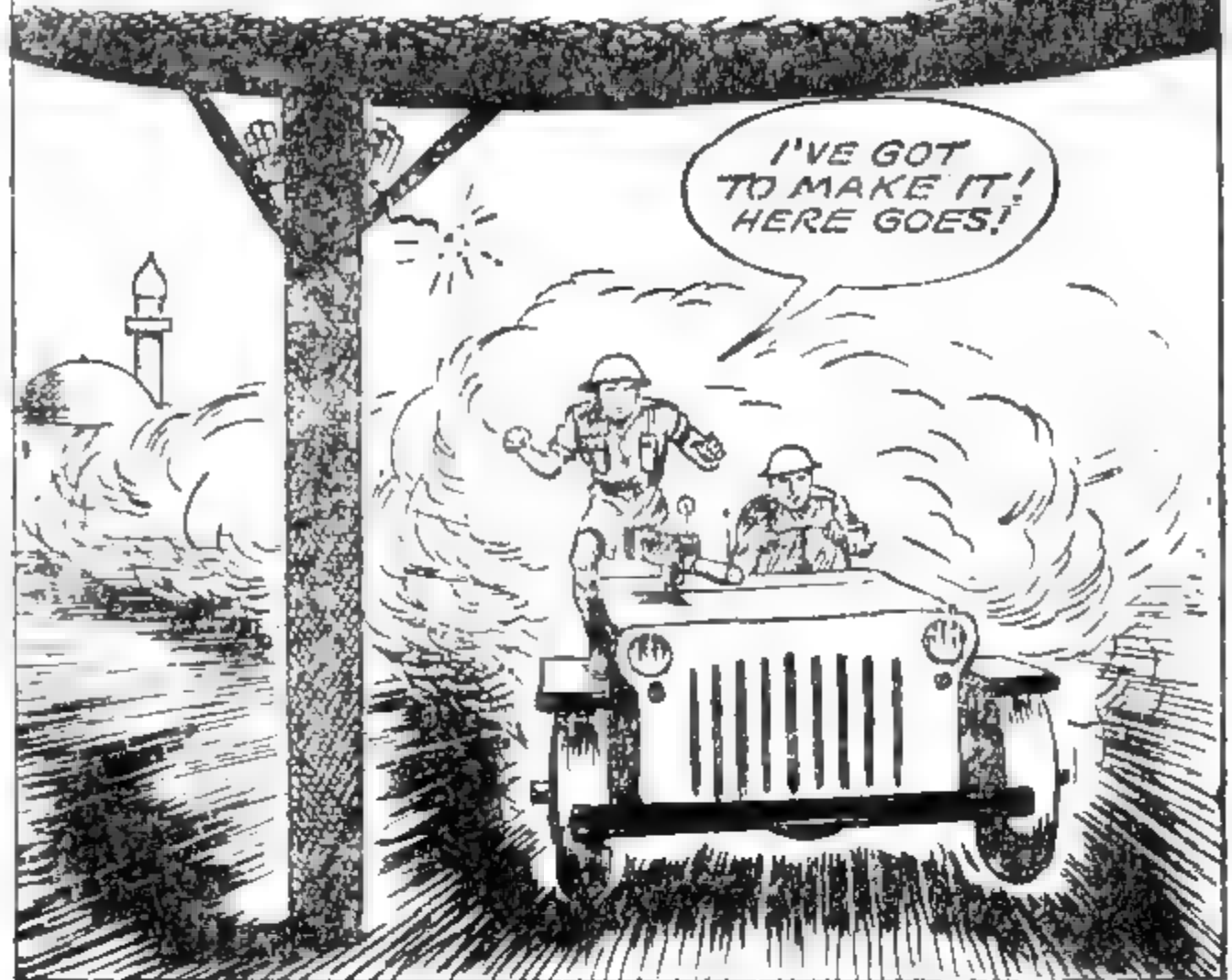
SHE'LL GO
SKY-HIGH IN LESS
THAN A MINUTE. WE
MUST GET WELL
CLEAR



DESPERATELY JIM SENT THE JEEP ROARING INTO ACTION



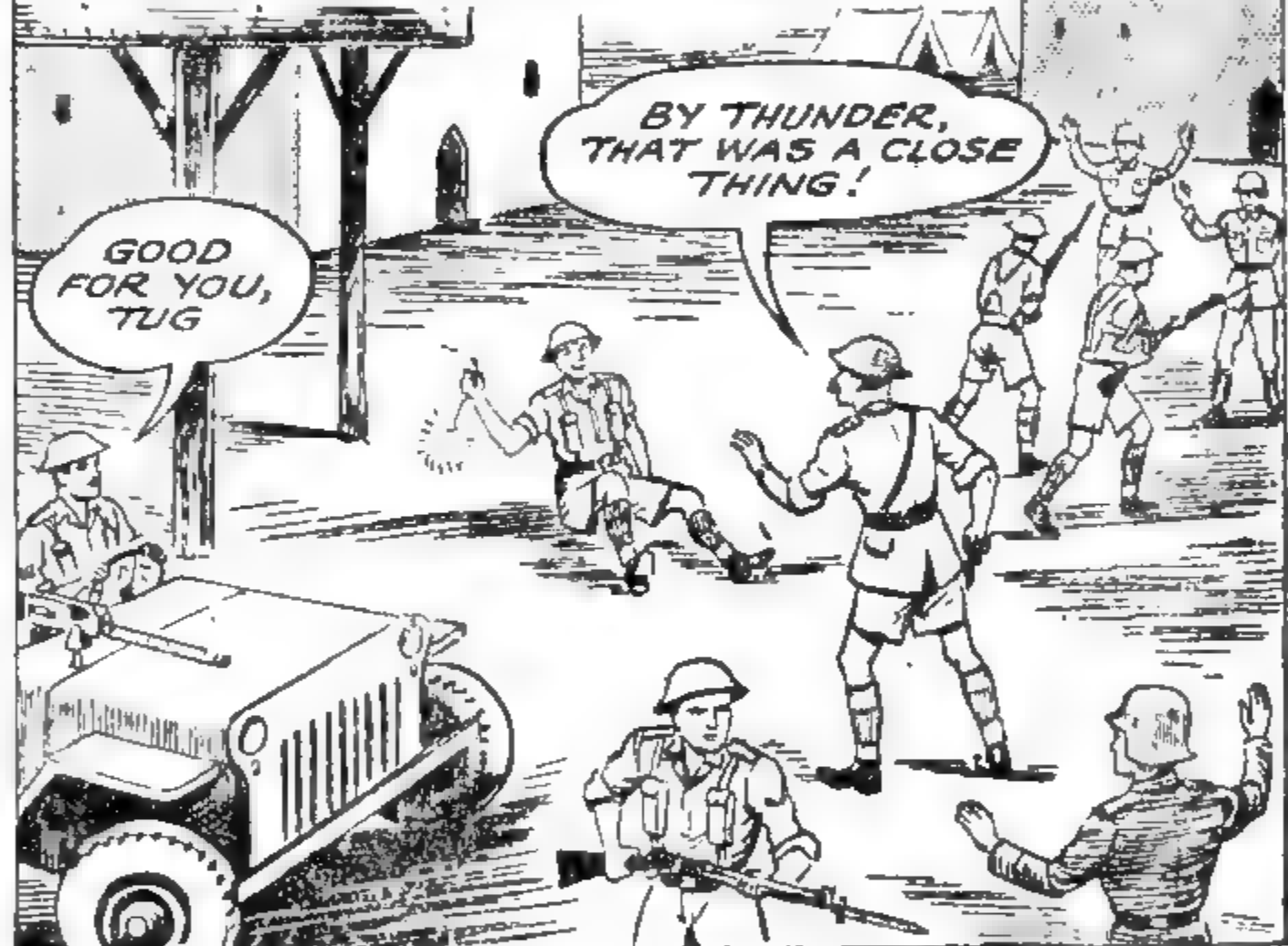
TUG POISED HIMSELF FOR A LEAP



TUG LEAPT, AND, WITH ONLY TWO SECONDS TO GO, GRABBED THE SPLUTTERING FUSE AND RIPPED IT AWAY



MEANWHILE, CAPT. BELL AND HIS MEN WERE ROUNDING UP THE ENEMY FORCE



YOU'VE DONE A WONDERFUL JOB OF WORK. BUT HOW ON EARTH DID YOU GUESS THAT THE MEN WE THOUGHT TO BE ARABS WERE REALLY NAZIS, SERGEANT?

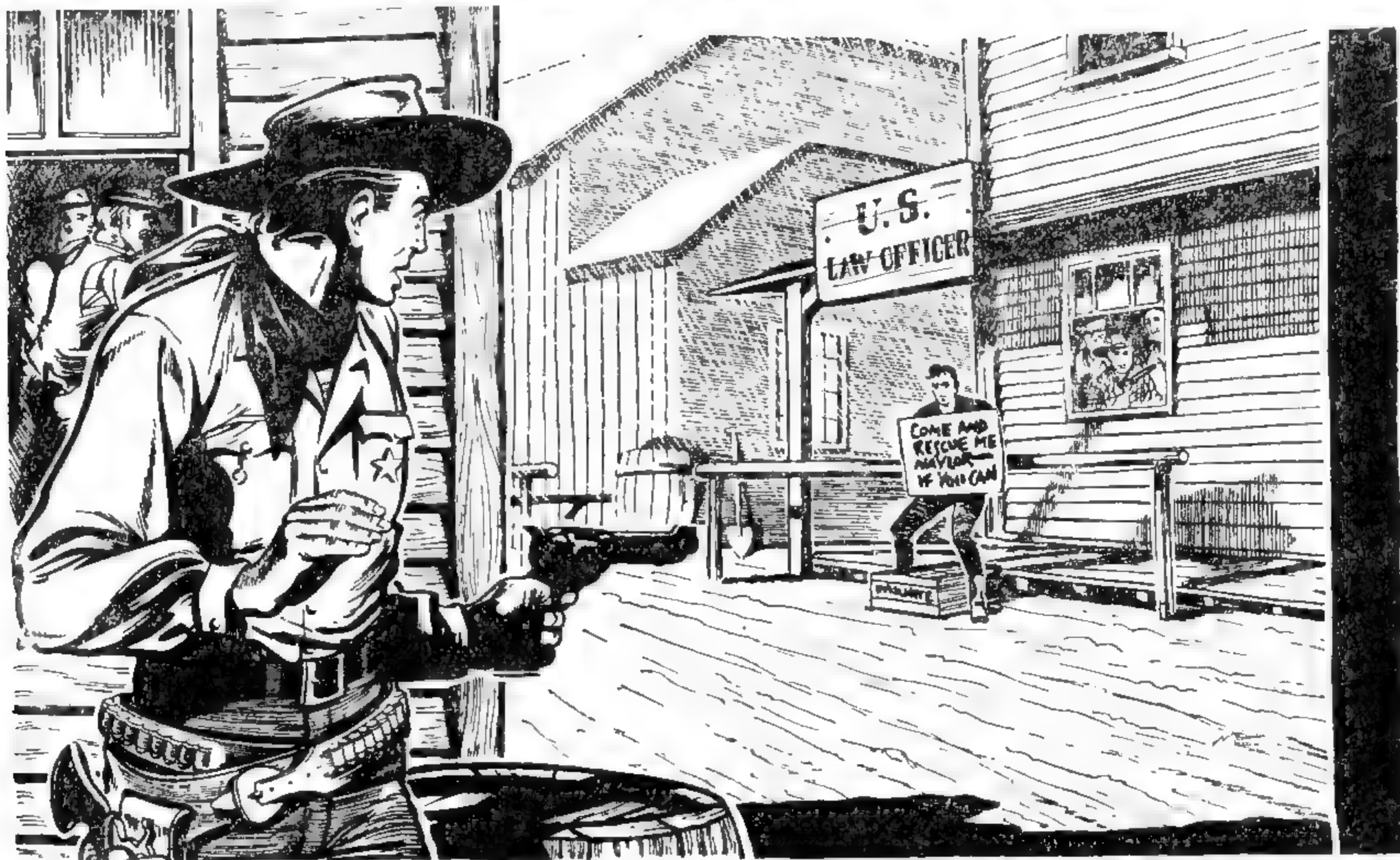


THAT EVENING, JIM AND TUG RETURNED TO THE OASIS AND SET FREE THE SHEIK AND HIS MEN. THE WOUNDED ARAB WAS THEN BROUGHT IN FROM THE DESERT, AND, AN HOUR LATER, THE PALS WERE HONOURED GUESTS AT A GREAT FEAST



OUTLAW AVENGERS MEET THEIR MATCH

BY
DEREK
KNIGHT



OUTLAW'S CHALLENGE

SPIKE Naylor cantered easily along the trail from Laramy Falls to Cordite, the tough little Western cattle-town which had elected him to be its sheriff.

Spike was tall and soft-voiced, with blue eyes set in a lean, brown face. Two worn leather holsters rode snugly below his hips, and from them peeped the ebony-smooth butts of the six-guns which had won him the reputation of being the smoothest-drawing, slickest-thinking gunfighter in the Middle West.

He leaned forward and patted the neck of his superb chestnut mount.

"Won't be long now, old feller," he drawled. "Another four miles to Cordite, then you an' me'll git our noses deep down in the feed-bag. We've sure earned our chow to-day."

The horse pricked its ears and whinnied as though it understood what Spike was saying.

"Take it easy, Flame," Spike chuckled. "We've a way to go yet. I figure——"

The words froze on his lips.

Frowning, he lifted his head and listened. Ahead of him, from around a bend in the trail, he heard a

ragged volley of shots and the frantic drumming of hooves on the iron-hard ground.

"Looks like somebody's in trouble out there," he snapped. "Mebbe we ought to see what it's all about."

At a twitch of the reins Flame tossed its head and sprang into a space-devouring gallop. Spike pulled up at the trail-bend in a tangle of bushes and peered out. His eyes narrowed grimly at what he saw.

"Why, it's Chuck!" he rasped.

Four hundred yards away, a youngster sat crouched in the saddle of his pony, his face tense as he urged his mount towards the bend where Spike stood in cover.

Behind the youngster three men galloped furiously in hot pursuit, flailing their horses to draw out their last ounce of speed.

Two of the riders had drawn their guns. Now taking deliberate aim, they loosed off a volley of bullets at their quarry. But the slugs fell short, kicking up angry spurts of dust fifty yards behind the pony's flying hooves.

An ice-cold gleam of anger shot from Spike's blue eyes. Chuck was the fourteen year old son of Rod Hallam, the Cordite blacksmith—and both Chuck

Spike Naylor, Sure-Shot Sheriff, in an Action-Packed Wild West Adventure

and his father were Spike's official deputies. The three hard-riding men on Chuck's heels were obviously not citizens of Cordite.

Spike's brain worked swiftly and coolly in an emergency. His gaze moved to two tall saplings growing on either side of the trail, and his mouth twisted into a slow grin. Leaping from the saddle, he unhitched his lariat and tied one end of it to the nearest tree, about seven feet from the ground. He crossed the narrow path to the other tree and waited, with the rope dragging in the dust.

From behind the tree he looked out on to the plain. Chuck had nearly reached the bend now, and Spike's practised eye told him the youngster would gain it in safety, even though his pursuers were rapidly gaining on him.

As Chuck raced round the bend, Spike called out to him.

"Into the bushes, Chuck! I'll fix these coyotes!"

Chuck reined his pony into cover. At the same time Spike hitched the free end of the rope to the other tree. He took two or three turns on it, and pulled it tight. The rope now stretched tautly across the trail about seven feet above the ground.

Spike had barely time to duck into cover before the three riders spurred around the bend, their eyes alert for Chuck and the pony. Their haste was their undoing!

Startled yells broke from the rider's lips as the taut rope caught them chest-high. The next moment it had whipped them out of their saddles and sent them crashing to the ground with bone-jarring shocks. Spike rose from the undergrowth, two rock-steady guns fanning the fallen men warningly.

"Okay, fellers," Spike snapped. "Reach for the sky! I don't want to see daylight between your ears an' your arms! Now reach—and hold 'em there!"

Scowling, the three men scrambled up from the ground. Suddenly one of them turned his shoulder and his hand flashed to his holster to make a lightning draw. Next moment he gave a snarl of pain and anger as Spike's gun roared, and a whistling slug creased his knuckles and sent the gun spinning from his numbed fingers.

"Next time I won't be playing!" Spike warned them coldly. "Now git 'em up—an' no tricks!"

Chuck emerged from cover and took their guns from their holsters while Spike covered them.

"Okay, Chuck," Spike drawled, when the men had been disarmed. "Now tell me what's been happening in Cordite while I've been over to Laramy Falls."

"Gosh, I'm sure glad to see you, Spike," cried Chuck. "There's a bunch of outlaws moved in from the badlands. They've taken over the gaol-

house and they're sittin' in your office waitin' for you. They got my dad——"

Spike's jaw tightened ominously.

"You don't mean——" he began, between clenched teeth.

"No, Spike," replied Chuck. "Dad ain't hurt, but they've tied him to the hitching rail in front of the gaolhouse. They're figgerin' you'll try to rescue him—an' walk straight into the trap. I tried to sneak out to warn you but they saw me go, an' these three lit out after me!"

Spike turned to his three captives who were watching him sullenly.

"Who's your boss?" he rapped out.

"Kingfisher," growled one of them "And he's gonna get you this time."

"Kingfisher!" Spike rasped.

A cold gleam flashed into his narrowed eyes. Kingfisher was a one-time rustler and hold-up man, and a seasoned gun-fighter. Two years ago the rustler had fallen foul of Spike, and the Sheriff had interrupted his lawless career by getting him sent to the state gaol for a spell. Now Kingfisher had served his term and had come out, burning for revenge on the man who had outwitted him.

"So Kingfisher's lookin' for me," Spike nodded. "Well, I don't aim to disappoint him. But we'll fix these tough babies first."

Five minutes later, Spike surveyed his handiwork with a quiet grin of satisfaction. He had roped the three outlaws in a circle around the trunk of a tree at the side of the trail. They glowered at him helplessly.

"They'll keep till we want 'em," Spike chuckled to his youthful deputy. "Now let's get back to Cordite an' loosen up your dad. Then we'll talk turkey with Kingfisher!"

Half a mile from Cordite Spike left Chuck in the cover of a stand of spruce while he rode on ahead to investigate. On the outskirts he dismounted behind the first building and surveyed the length of the main street carefully.

The street was deserted save for one lone figure. It was Spike's deputy, Rod Hallam. He stood with his back to the hitching-rail in front of the gaolhouse, his hands secured behind him to the long bar. His head was bent, and his powerful shoulders sagged wearily. On the ground in front of him stood a shapeless object which Spike could not identify at that distance. A square of cardboard flapped on Rod's chest.

Behind Rod, Spike could see the open window of the sheriff's office. Two blunt carbine-muzzles lay across the sill. Chuck was right. Kingfisher was waiting for the show-down.

Calmly, Spike unhitched his lariat from Flame's saddle. Then he ran lightly along the backs of the buildings until he reached the back porch of the

Silver Holster saloon which stood opposite the gaol-house. He peered in at the window.

Cal Wayne and a group of Cordite cattlemen stood at the front window, looking out on to the street. Their jaws were clenched with cold anger.

"You sure picked a cosy spot to watch another man fight your battles!" Spike said coldly.

The cattlemen wheeled in consternation. Relief flooded into their grim faces as they recognised Spike.

"Spike!" rapped Wayne. "How did you get here?"

"That's nobody's business but my own!" Spike answered.

"Why aren't you galoots out there, slingin' lead at the buzzards?"

Cal Wayne's face darkened, and there was a murmur of protest from his companions.

"I'll tell you why, Spike," Cal said thickly. "Come over here and take a gander into the street."

Spike edged to the corner of the saloon. His eyes narrowed at what he saw, and his mouth set in a tight-lipped line.

Fifteen paces from him across the street Rod stood with his back to the hitching-rail, his granite face distorted with a scowl of helpless fury. His bruised and tattered appearance proved he had put up a stern fight before being overpowered.

Through the open window of the sheriff's office behind him Spike made out a bunch of a dozen armed, hard-eyed bandits watching the street coldly. In their midst sat a broad, thick-lipped man with heavy-lidded eyes, his feet sprawled across Spike's desk. It was Kingfisher.

But it was not the sight of him that flooded Spike with a wave of icy anger. It was the object lying at Rod's feet.

Spike could see it clearly now. It was a box of dynamite charges. The lid had been roughly hacked off to reveal the slim, deadly casings. And from Rod's neck hung a white sheet of cardboard. On it had been scrawled in rough letters:

**"COME AND RESCUE ME, NAYLOR—
IF YOU CAN"**

DYNAMITE DANGER

"YOU see how it is, Spike," Wayne muttered as the sheriff vaulted grimly into the saloon. "We daren't start any gun-play. One stray slug in that dynamite an' it's curtains for Rod. They've sure pulled a fast one across us."

"Sorry fellers," said Spike slowly. "I guess I just felt sore about things."

"Forget it, Spike," replied Cal Wayne. "What are you aimin' to do now?"

"Two things," snapped Spike in a low, steely voice. "First I've got to get Rod out of that fix. Then I aim to settle an account with Kingfisher!"

He walked back to the rear window, easing his guns in their holsters.

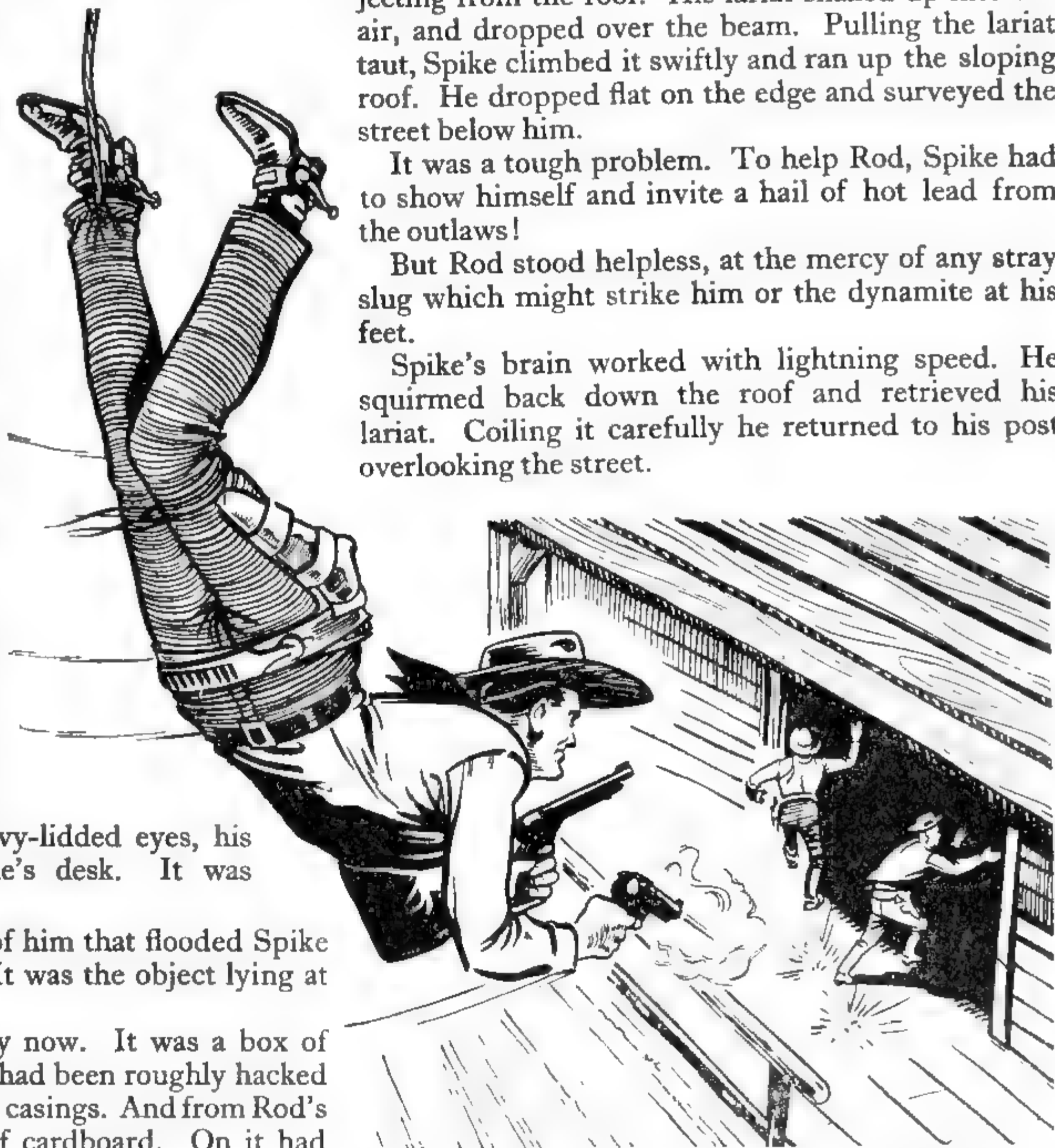
"You guys stay here," he called back into the room. "When I need you I'll tell you."

He vaulted lightly through the window. Then, looking upwards, his gaze settled on a beam projecting from the roof. His lariat snaked up into the air, and dropped over the beam. Pulling the lariat taut, Spike climbed it swiftly and ran up the sloping roof. He dropped flat on the edge and surveyed the street below him.

It was a tough problem. To help Rod, Spike had to show himself and invite a hail of hot lead from the outlaws!

But Rod stood helpless, at the mercy of any stray slug which might strike him or the dynamite at his feet.

Spike's brain worked with lightning speed. He squirmed back down the roof and retrieved his lariat. Coiling it carefully he returned to his post overlooking the street.



Although dangling high above the street, caught in the cunning rope-trap, Sheriff Spike managed to drive off the outlaws. But how could the fearless law-man safely escape from his perilous position?

Opposite him reared the big "U.S. Law Officer" sign on the front of the gaolhouse. It was a large square board supported by two iron brackets, and it hung to one side of the window of the sheriff's office where Kingfisher and his gang lay in wait.

Spike's guns flashed into his hands. Then the brooding silence of the street was shattered by the roar of gun-fire. Three speeding slugs sheared through some of the iron brackets of the sign as if they had been butter. The heavy sign dropped crazily then tilted towards the ground, almost completely blocking the office-window.

Spike had a few seconds of precious time in which to work before the outlaws recovered from their surprise and realise what had happened.

Rising to his feet, Spike's gaze fell on the coping running along the top of the gaolhouse and jutting out above the alley at the side of the building. His lariat hissed high across the street and the noose dropped snugly over the coping. Spike pulled it taut. Then stooping, he fashioned a quick loop in his end of the lariat and inserted his foot.

He was ready!

Judging the distance, Spike launched himself into space from the roof of the Silver Holster.

He stood in the rope-loop, holding on with one hand, his body bent almost double, swinging in a smooth arc outwards and downwards—straight towards the dynamite case!

At the split-second instant he leaned outwards from the rope. His clawing right hand reached for the canvas carrying loop around the case—and missed it! He snatched back frantically, and this time his fingers closed around the handle. With a jerk the case leaped from the ground as the swing of the rope carried Spike upwards again towards the alleyway.

Now was the critical moment! Spike had to get rid of the dynamite. One rash movement, one slip—and the deadly explosive would fall to the ground. If that happened, Rod and Spike would be blown to destruction in the hot blast of dynamite!

The outward swing of the rope carried Spike and his lethal burden through the alleyway. For a fraction of a second Spike's body was level with the roof of the gaolhouse. Reaching upwards he set the dynamite case on the roof. He held his breath as the box settled with a scarcely perceptible jar.

Now he had to get to Rod before the outlaws gathered their wits and rushed out into the street with guns blasting.

Then came disaster!

As the rope carried Spike down on the return swing—it fouled a wire running overhead between the gaolhouse and the Silver Holster opposite. There was a vicious jerk as the rope caught and held.

The sudden arm-jolting shock wrenched Spike's hand-grip loose, and the next moment he was

swinging head downwards fifteen feet above the street, his ankle caught in the loop!

As he swung like a crazy pendulum, Spike could see Rod's upturned face watching him open-mouthed. Heavy footsteps were clattering inside the gaolhouse. With their view of the street blotted out by the hanging sign, the outlaws had now gathered their wits and were surging out of the sheriff's office and down the passage into the open. Before Spike could free himself he would be a helpless target for their guns!

Two of the outlaws reached the doorway of the gaolhouse together. Their jaws dropped in amazement at the sight of their enemy swinging above them—then their guns came up!

Crack! Crack-crack!

Spike's guns flashed roaring from his holsters in a crimson spurt of flame. One of the outlaws sagged back against the woodwork with a yell of pain, his hand clasped to his shoulder. The other danced frantically as a slug tore venomously at his boot-heel, and a second one sliced his stetson from his head. The two men ducked and dived back into the shelter of the building.

Spike knew, however, that he had gained only a moment's respite. He holstered his guns and swiftly whipped out his knife. Unclasping it between his strong white teeth he reached upwards and slashed at the rope around his ankles. It parted and he twisted in mid-air, falling on his feet like a cat.

He darted towards Rod. One quick slash of his knife and the blacksmith shook himself free from his bonds.

A moment later Spike had caught Rod's shoulder and hurled the deputy spinning towards the alleyway. Spike himself rolled in after Rod as a battery of slugs ripped and chewed the ground behind him.

Beyond the alley the street had crashed into life. Gunfire rent the air. With a shattering clatter the big "U.S. Law Officer" sign fell away from the office window. A voice from within shouted hoarsely.

"That was Naylor!" it cried. "Git him—dead or alive!"

"Quick, Rod!" Spike panted. "Follow me!"

Re-loading his six-guns as he ran, Spike pounded down the alley to the rear of the gaolhouse, Rod racing grimly on his heels. Suddenly, as they came out into the open, Spike pressed Rod back to the wall with a sweep of his arm.

The blunt muzzle of a carbine swivelled towards them as an outlaw in the back of the gaolhouse took aim through the narrow slit of a partly-opened window.

Spike's hand dipped to his holster in a blur of speed. Two slugs slammed into the top section of the window, smashing the glass into a thousand

hurtling fragments. There came a howl of anguish—and the heavy carbine bullet thudded harmlessly into the wall above Rod's head.

In a flash Spike leaped into the room through the shattered window. Pouncing on the dazed outlaw his gun-butt rose and fell, and the man went out like a light. Spike snatched the guns from the unconscious man's holster and handed them out to Rod.

"Take these, Rod!" he rasped. "Now work your way along the back of the buildings, and cross the street lower down. Make for the Silver Holster. Cal Wayne's there with his cattlemen. Tell 'em to start pumping every slug they've got into the front of the gaolhouse. I want these buzzards pinned down in here so they can't move."

Rod took the guns with a grim smile.

"What are you figgerin' on doin' Spike?" he rumbled.

"Me an' Kingfisher's got a private appointment," Spike grinned. "Now you get movin'! I'll cover you from here."

THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

AS Rod darted away on his mission Spike watched from the window. He heard a heavy pounding of footsteps down the alley. Three men rushed out and saw Rod racing across a piece of waste land behind the smithy.

"'Thar's one of 'em," a voice shouted.

But before the outlaws could lift their guns, a stream of slugs spurted from Spike's shooting irons. One of the outlaws clutched at his belt as a slug cut it loose. He leaped for cover in the alley, followed by the others. Chips of splintered wood rose in the air as Spike raked the building with a tattoo of bullets.

Spike blew down his smoking gun-barrels and replaced them in his holsters. It would be some time before the three startled outlaws screwed up their courage to venture out again within range of his guns.

"I reckon that takes care of 'em for a while," he muttered.

Turning back from the window he padded softly across the room and opened the door a fraction of an inch. He looked out into the passage. From

behind the closed door of his office, further along the passage, he could hear harsh voices and the metallic clank of guns. Spike waited impatiently.

"It's about time Wayne and the boys started shootin'," he murmured. "I wonder if Rod got held up."

Suddenly, as if in reply to his words, the crash of gunfire echoed from the street outside, and bullets began to thud into the front of the gaolhouse. Rod had got through to the Silver Holster with Spike's message, and now the cattlemen had joined the fight in earnest.

Startled yells came from the office along the



"This'll settle the account between you and me for keeps," rasped Kingfisher. As the outlaw-leader pressed the trigger, however, Spike hurled a tobacco-sack into his face, spoiling his aim.

passage. There came the clatter of an overturned chair, followed by the crackle of answering gunfire.

Now was Spike's time to act—while Kingfisher and his mob were tied down by the cattlemen's bullets.

Opening the door Spike stalked silently along the passage towards the door of his office. His hand closed on the door-handle. It was his intention to fling open the door and go in with guns roaring to bring the fight to a speedy ending.

Spike eased his guns in their holsters and drew

a deep breath. He braced his shoulders and grasped the door-handle.

Then a voice spoke behind him——

"Okay, Naylor," it drawled lazily. "I figured just what you would do. Now reach for the ceiling."

Spike's hands lifted slowly from his hips and he looked back over his shoulder.

Behind him a wooden staircase ran to the upper floor of the gaolhouse. On the top step stood a thick-lipped man with close-set, heavy-lidded eyes and lank black hair. In his plump fingers two rock-steady gun-barrels pointed unwaveringly at Spike's back.

"So it's you, Kingfisher," Spike said quietly. "I ain't seen you for a long time."

"Yes, it's me, Naylor," said Kingfisher, walking slowly down the stairs. "Keep your hands away from them holsters. My fingers is just itchin' to pull these triggers."

He walked up to Spike, plucked the guns from his holsters, and tossed them into a corner. Then he backed away, his cruel, black eyes narrowed to venomous slits.

"This is the pay-off, Naylor," he went on in a cold, calculating voice. "You put me away for two years. Now I'm puttin' you away for good. I've waited a long time for this."

Spike's brain worked rapidly. Kingfisher had the drop on him. He had to play for time.

"You know you haven't a chance, Kingfisher," Spike drawled.

"I've a better chance than you," the outlaw snapped. "I've got you at the business end of my gun-barrels. Now turn round and face me!"

Slowly Spike turned to face Kingfisher. His hands crept deliberately upwards, hugging the sides of his body as they lifted. For a split second his eyes lowered to the cord-loop of the tobacco-sack peeping from his breast-pocket. As his right hand came up his thumb hooked in the loop and drew it out. He gave a quick flick of his wrist as he turned, and the tobacco-sack hung from his thumb down the back of his forearm, invisible to Kingfisher. The speed of the manoeuvre had completely deceived the outlaw.

Kingfisher stood five paces away from Spike, his eyes gleaming wolfishly with triumph.

"All right, Naylor," he rasped. "I reckon this'll settle the account between you an' me for keeps!"

The hammers of his guns started to lift as his fingers tightened on the triggers.

But in that moment, Spike's right hand flicked with the speed of a striking snake. The tobacco-sack he had been holding shot into Kingfisher's face catching him on the cheek. For a fraction of a second the outlaw was caught unawares.

It was long enough for Spike!

He dropped flat to the floor as two slugs from Kingfisher's guns drilled into the woodwork behind him. Then, before the outlaw could lower his aim, Spike reached forward, grabbed Kingfisher's ankle, and pulled him down with a crash. The next moment the two men were locked in a wild-cat tangle, fighting tigerishly for possession of the guns.

Spike's hands clamped on Kingfisher's wrists in an iron grip. As they rolled over and over on the floor, he increased his pressure, forcing the outlaw's wrists backwards. Chest to chest, the two men strained, teeth clenched and jaws knotted in supreme effort.

But Kingfisher was powerless in that numbing grip. A look of alarm shot into his eyes. At last the guns clattered to the floor from his nerveless fingers.

Kicking them out of reach, Spike leaped to his feet and grabbed the outlaw by his bunched shirt. Then he half-lifted Kingfisher from the floor. His right arm swung and his fist connected with the outlaw's jaw. Kingfisher's head sagged and lolled on his shoulders. He was out cold!

Spike let him slide to the floor, then gathered up his own guns. Gunfire was still echoing along the passage, and slugs whined viciously as they rebounded from the walls and bit into the woodwork. A fog of gun-smoke was creeping through the building.

Holding his guns poised, Spike kicked open his office door and strode into the room. The four outlaws crouched below the window-ledge turned to see a tall, lean fighting-fury with steel-blue eyes standing in the open doorway. Two gun-barrels fanned over them menacingly.

"Well, what's it to be?" Spike snapped. "Do you throw your hands in—or do we start throwin' slugs? It's all the same to me!"

They looked at each other uncertainly. Slowly their guns dropped and their hands went up. A minute later Spike waved his neckerchief from the window-ledge and the storm of gunfire from the Silver Holster stopped abruptly. Rod and the cattlemen piled out and raced across the street to Spike.

With a grim smile Spike surveyed the wreckage of his office and turned to Rod.

"I reckon we've a month's work ahead of us to straighten this out," he remarked. "I'm goin' to see Kingfisher and his mob are put away for a mighty long time."

"Sure thing, Spike," growled Rod. "But I guess the next time you have guests in your office you'd better warn 'em to leave their shooting-irons outside."

THE END

NO SURRENDER TO THE SPANISH RAIDERS

BY
DAN
COLT

DURING THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH I, THREE LADS WERE MAKING MERRY IN THEIR UNCLE'S HOUSE. THE LADS WERE BROTHERS -- PAUL, ERIC AND RODNEY. THEIR UNCLE WAS ADMIRAL BURTON, AND THEY WERE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS ABSENCE TO TRY OUT SOME OF THE SWORDS IN HIS ARMOURY.



SUDDENLY PAUL GAVE A START

HIST!
I HEAR SOUNDS--
DISTANT FOOTSTEPS!
IT MUST BE UNCLE
AND HIS MEN
RETURNING

THE BROTHERS HASTENED TO PUT AWAY THE SWORDS, BUT RODNEY PAUSED BY THE WINDOW

IT CANNOT BE
UNCLE. HE'S GONE INLAND,
TO FAIRCOMBE MARKET.
SOMEONE APPROACHES
FROM THE COVE
BELOW, PAUL!

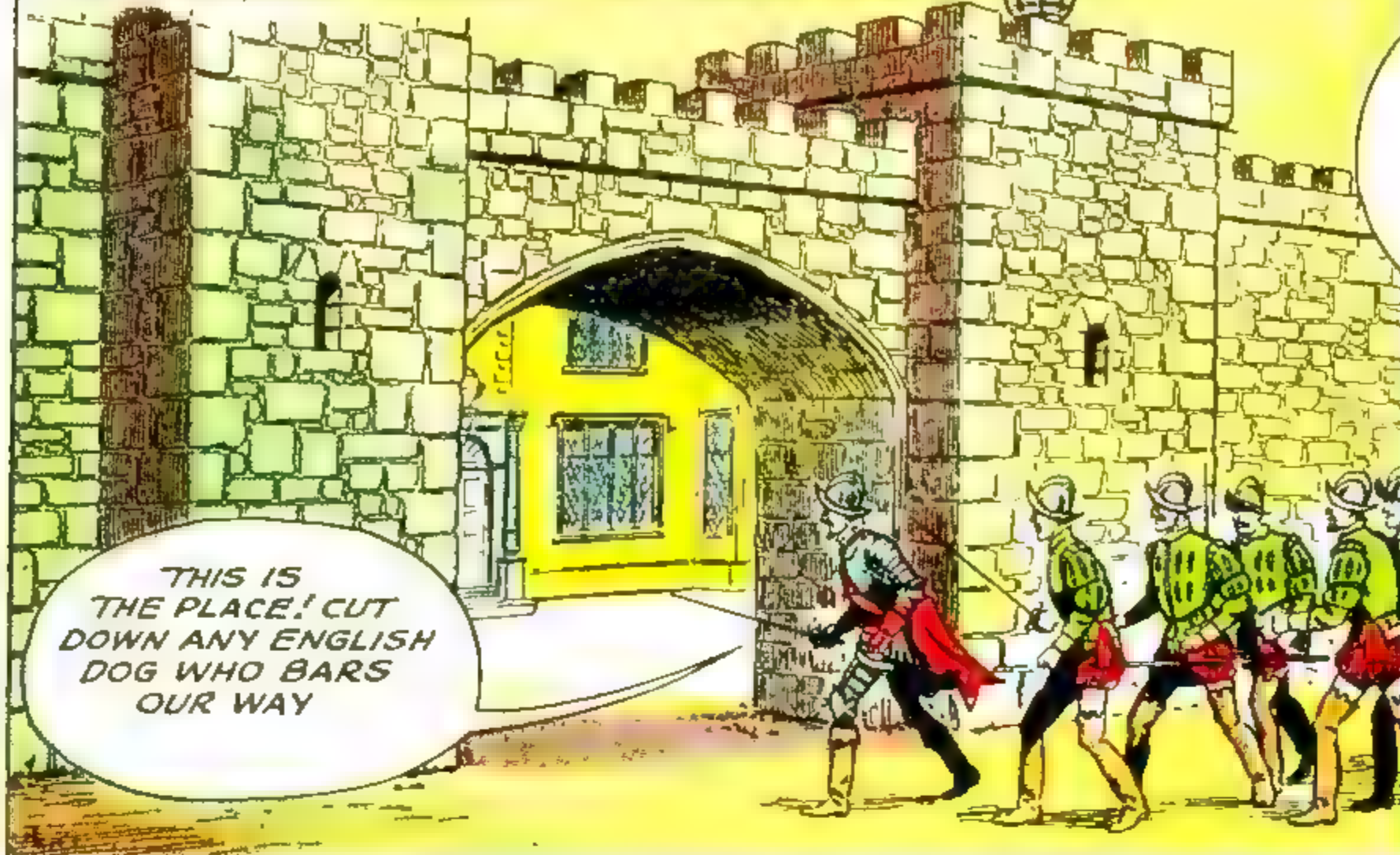
THOU'RT
RIGHT! AND--
BY ST. GEORGE!
A GREAT SHIP
HAS DRAWN
UP AT THE
JETTY!

TO THE BROTHERS' AMAZEMENT, A PARTY OF ARMED MEN CAME MARCHING UP THE CLIFF PATH!

PAUL!
THEY'RE SPANIARDS!
'TIS A SPANISH RAID!
YONDER SHIP MUST
BE THEIR
GALLEON!

ODDSFISH!
THEY COME TO
ATTACK--AND WE'RE
ALONE IN THE
HOUSE!

THE SPANIARDS NEARED THE OUTER GATE



THIS IS THE PLACE! CUT DOWN ANY ENGLISH DOG WHO BARS OUR WAY

THE ACCURSED ENGLISH RAID OUR TREASURESHIPS AND LAUGH IN OUR FACES. BUT REVENGE IS SWEET! WE'LL LOOT THE HOUSE OF THEIR PRECIOUS ADMIRAL BURTON AND SLAY EVERYONE WITHIN. AND ERE WE LEAVE WE'LL BLOW IT TO A THOUSAND PIECES!



AS SOON AS THE BROTHERS HAD RECOVERED FROM THEIR ASTONISHMENT, PAUL SNATCHED A BLAZING BRAND FROM THE FIREPLACE



TO SWORD! DOWN TO THE GREAT HALL AND BAR THE DOORS! I'LL REJOIN YOU IN A FEW MINUTES. BUT FIRST I HAVE A TASK TO DO

A TASK, PAUL? HOW MEAN YOU?

PAUL FLUNG WIDE THE WINDOW AND SPRANG ON TO THE SILL



I GO TO LIGHT THE BEACON ON YONDER CORNER TOWER. 'Twill BRING HELP- IF WE CAN BUT HOLD OFF THESE SPANIARDS LONG ENOUGH!

CLUTCHING SWORD AND BLAZING TORCH, PAUL MADE A DARING LEAP FROM THE HIGH WINDOW



I WILL MAKE MY WAY ALONG THIS WALL, AND THUS KEEP OUT OF THE SPANIARDS' REACH

AT THAT MOMENT, THE RAIDERS BURST INTO THE COURTYARD, AND THEIR CAPTAIN RASPED A SHARP COMMAND



STOP THAT DOG-QUICK! HE GOES TO LIGHT THE WARNING BEACON! JUAN! PEDRO! TO YONDER TOWER. THE REST OF YOU FOLLOW ME!

TWO SPANISH SOLDIERS TURNED AND RACED OFF WITH DRAWN SWORDS

PAUL WAS NOW LEAPING FROM BATTLEMENT TO BATTLEMENT

INTO THE TOWER, PEDRO! UP THE STEPS!

IF I CAN SET THE WARNING BEACON ABLAZE IT SHOULD BRING HELP WITHIN THE QUARTER-HOUR. FAIRCOTTE IS BUT A MILE AWAY OVER THE DOWNS

WE MUST REACH THE TOP BEFORE YON ENGLISH CUB GETS THERE

THEN THE LAD GAVE A GASP OF DISMAY, FOR THE TWO SPANIARDS SUDDENLY APPEARED ON THE TOWER-TOP

NOT A SECOND TOO SOON, AMIGO. HERE HE COMES

PLAGUE! TAKE THE LUCK! BUT I'LL NOT LET THEM STOP ME GETTING TO YONDER BEACON

FEARLESSLY PAUL FLUNG HIMSELF AT THE TWO SPANISH SOLDIERS

ON GUARD, DOGS! TASTE GOOD ENGLISH STEEL!

PAUL PUT UP THE FIGHT OF HIS LIFE, BUT SLOWLY HE WAS FORCED BACK

WE'LL SOON SETTLE THIS PUNY ENGLISH WHELP

CUT HIM DOWN!

AND A FEW SECONDS LATER—

MY SWORD! 'TIS SNAPPED!

NOW WE HAVE HIM! ONE THRUST, PEDRO, AND ALL IS OVER

BUT PAUL WASN'T BEATEN YET. WHIRLING THE FLAMING TORCH IN A CIRCLE, HE SPRANG BOLDLY FORWARD

COUNT NOT YOUR CHICKENS ERE THEY'RE HATCHED! BACK, SPANISH CURS!

AAGH!

AS THE YELLING SPANIARDS TUMBLED FROM THE CASTLE WALL, PAUL HURLED HIS TORCH TOWARDS THE BEACON

THERE! MAY MY AIM BE TRUE!

THE TORCH FELL ACCURATELY INTO THE BRAZIER, AND THE OIL-SOAKED WOOD AT ONCE CRACKLED INTO FLAME

'TIS WELL ABLAZE ALREADY! NOW TO THE AID OF MY BROTHERS

MEANWHILE, THE MAIN PARTY OF SPANIARDS WERE BATTERING AT THE STOUT FRONT DOORS

THEY ARE GIVING WAY! ONCE MORE, AND WE SHALL BE IN. HEAVE, MEN! HEAVE!

WITH A CRASH LIKE THUNDER, THE DOORS SHATTERED INWARDS

DEATH TO THE ENGLISH! LONG LIVE SPAIN!

HERE THEY COME! 'TIS THE END.-- BUT WE'LL GO DOWN FIGHTING!

WITH FIERCE YELLS, THE SPANIARDS HURLED THEMSELVES AT THE TWO LADS

SHOW THEM NO MERCY. SLAY THE CRINGING DOGS--AND THEN FOR THE PLUNDER!

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER, BROTHER! 'TIS A BATTLE TO THE DEATH!

MEANWHILE, PAUL RACED BACK ALONG THE WALL, AND SPRANG FOR A BALCONY BELOW HIM

THE SPANIARDS HAVE BROKEN IN--SO I'LL TRY TO KEEP THEM IN TILL HELP ARRIVES

PAUL BURST THROUGH THE WINDOW AND LOOKED DOWN INTO THE GREAT HALL

MY BROTHERS ARE HARD BESET. UNLESS I ACT SWIFTLY, THEY ARE DOOMED. I MUST SAVE THEM--THEN RALLY THEM TO MY SIDE

LIKE LIGHTNING, PAUL LEAPT TO THE WEAPONS THAT ADORNED THE PANELLLED WALLS

THESE PIKES AND HALBERDS SHOULD DO THE TRICK

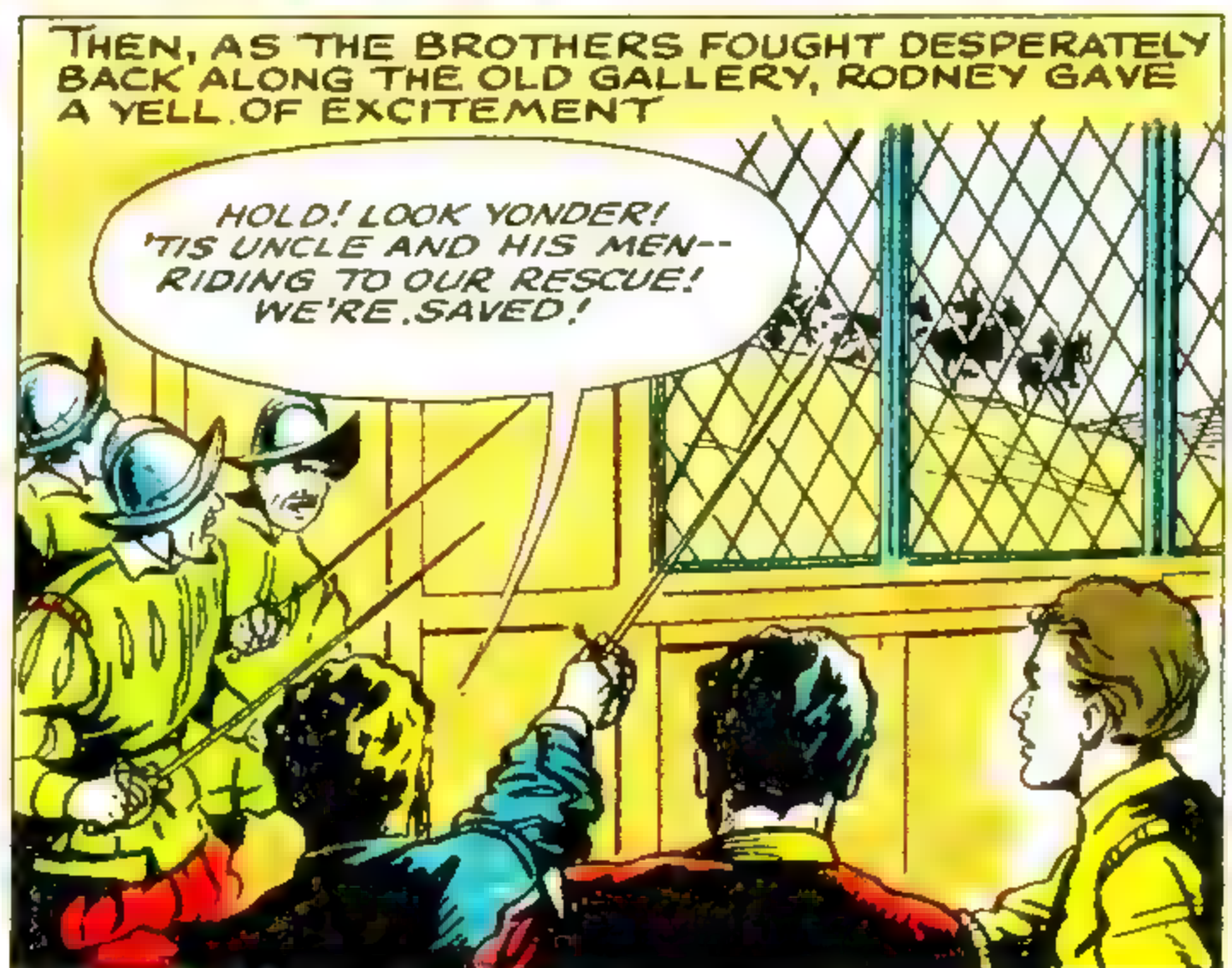
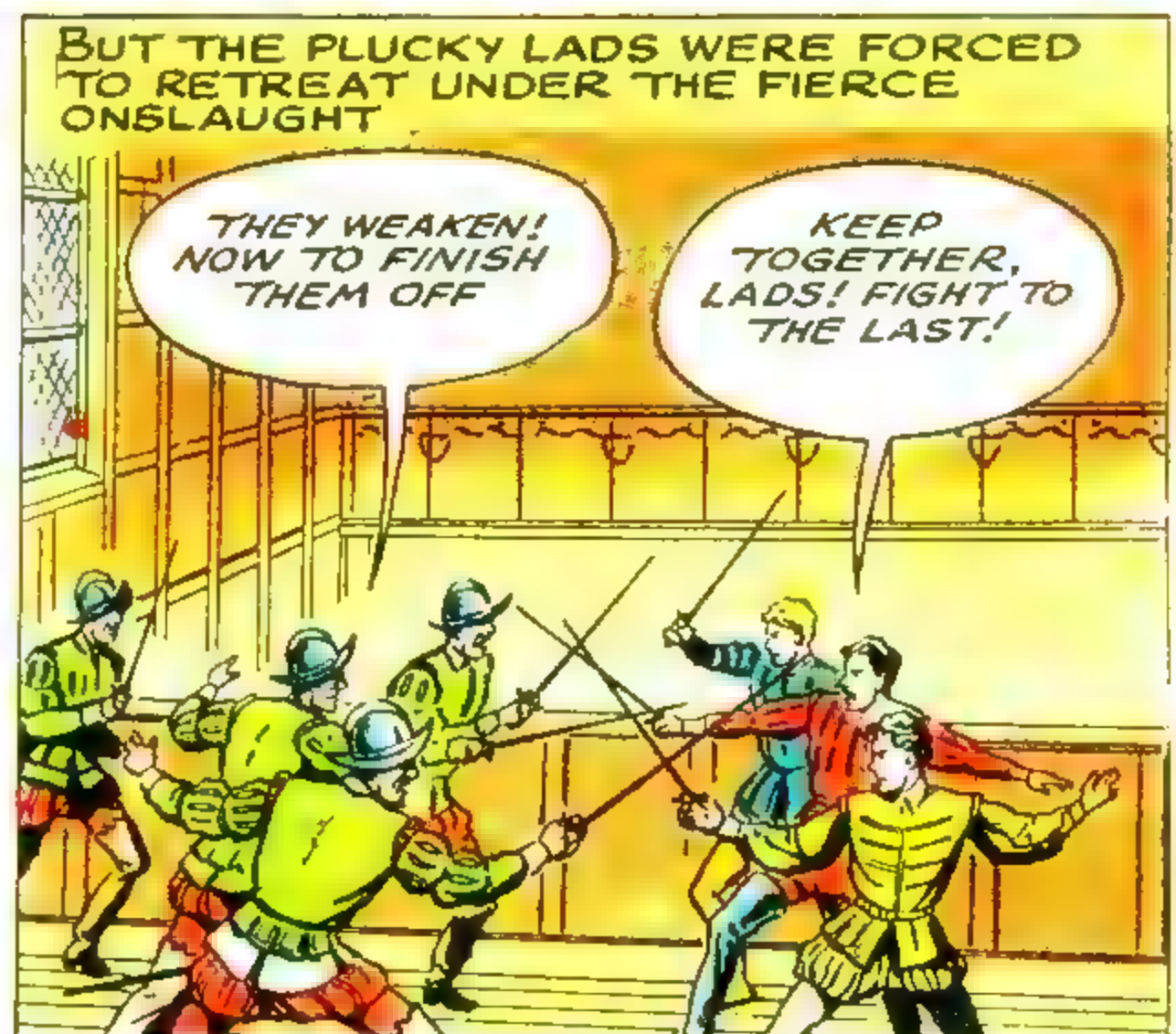
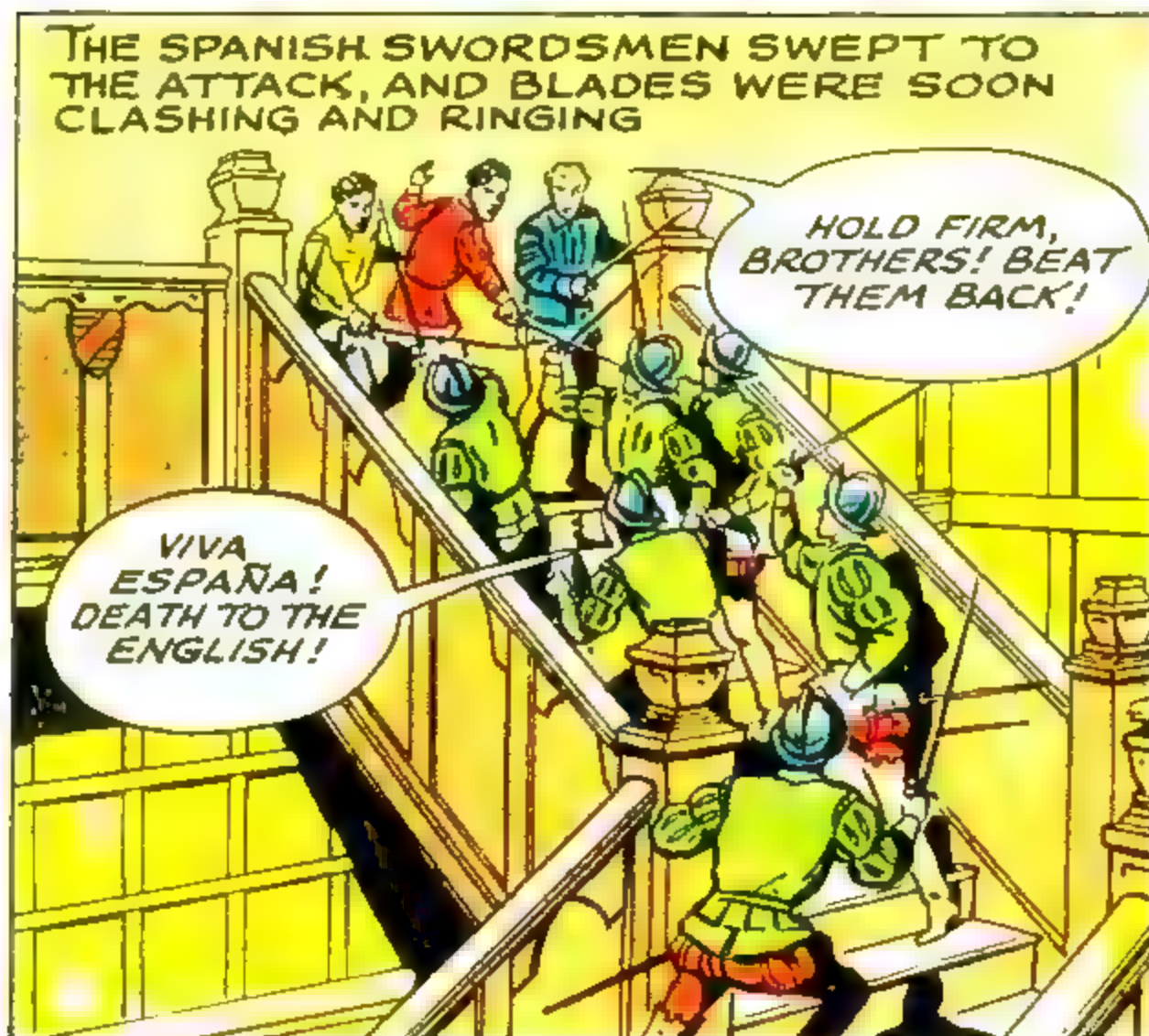
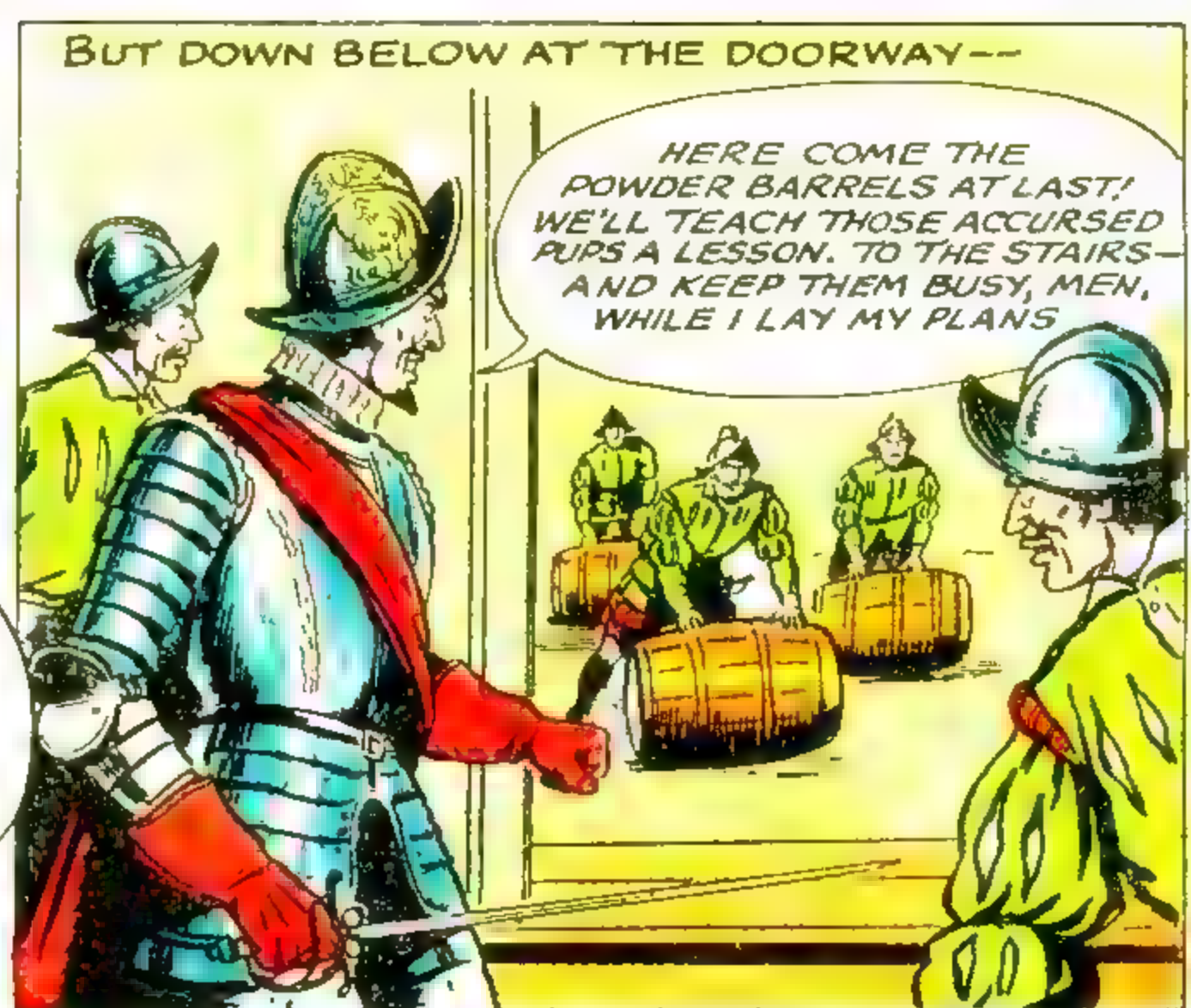
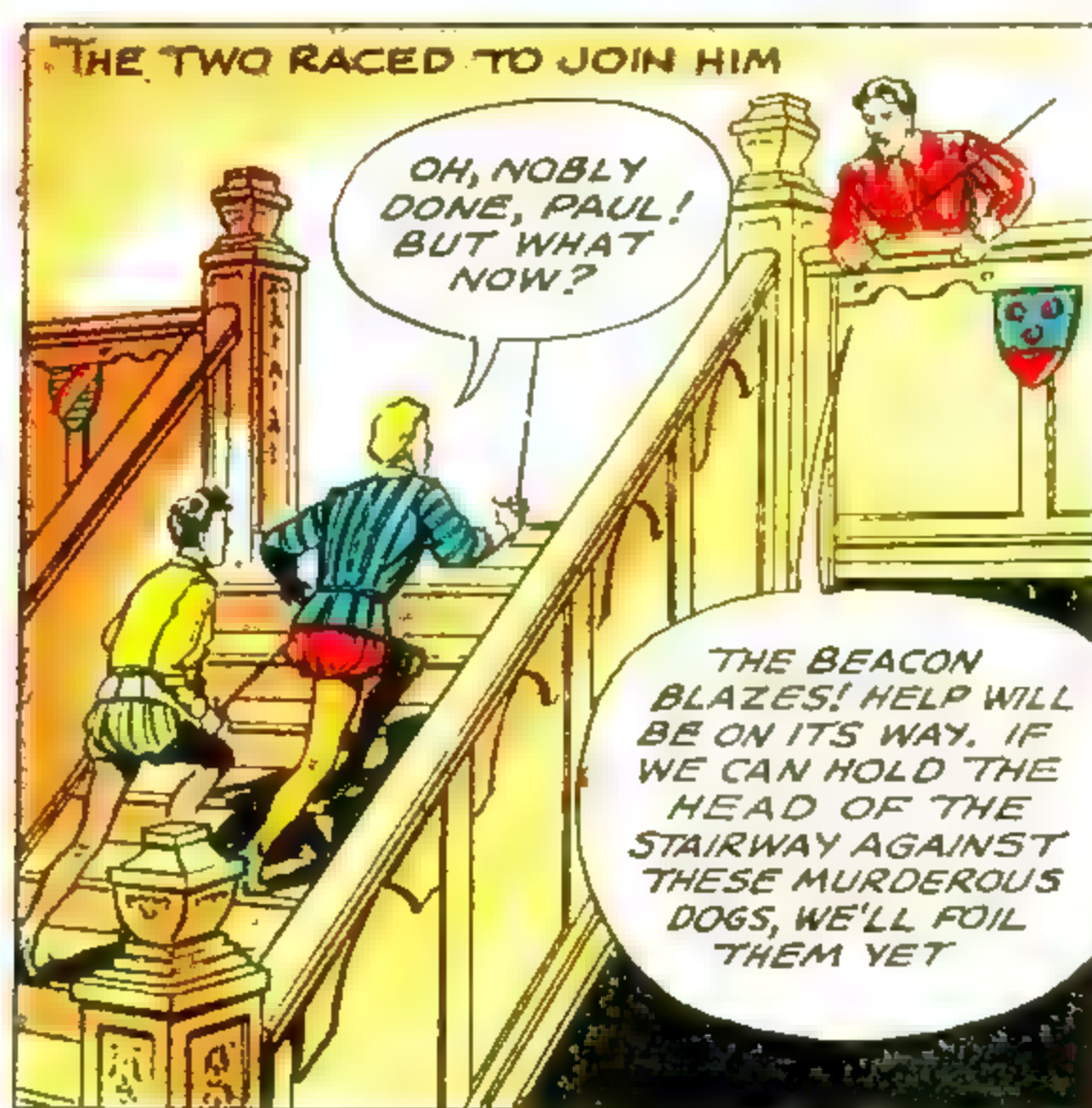
THE NEXT MOMENT, THE SPANIARDS REELED BACK WITH STARTLED YELLS AS WEAPONS RAINED DOWN UPON THEM

CARAMBA! WE'RE ATTACKED FROM ABOVE!

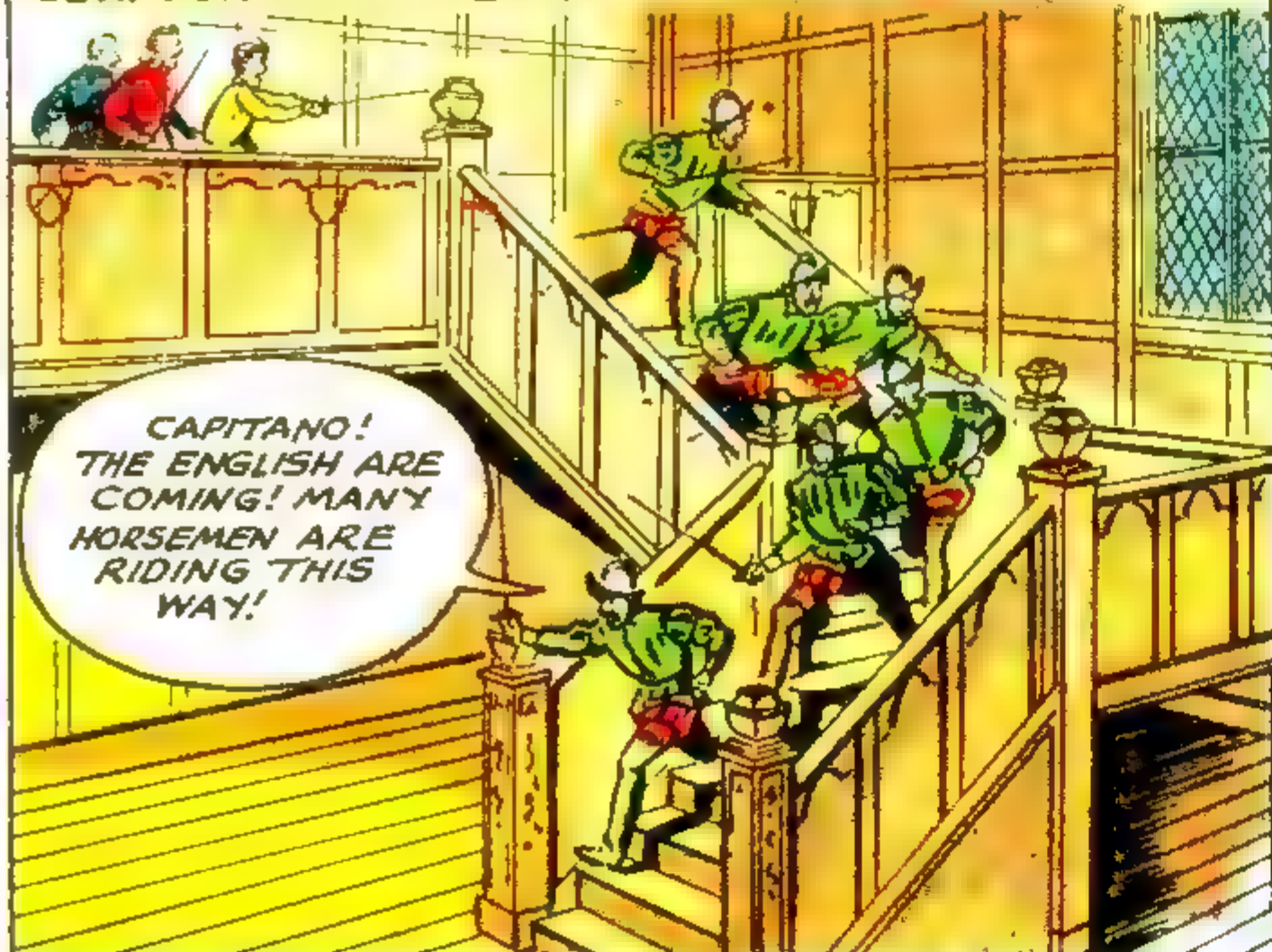
BACK FOR YOUR LIVES, AMIGOS!

PAUL SNATCHED A SWORD FROM THE WALL AND SHOUTED TO HIS BROTHERS

ERIC! RODNEY! TO THE STAIRS! QUICKLY!



THE SPANIARDS TORE DOWN THE STAIRWAY IN
CONFUSION AND ALARM



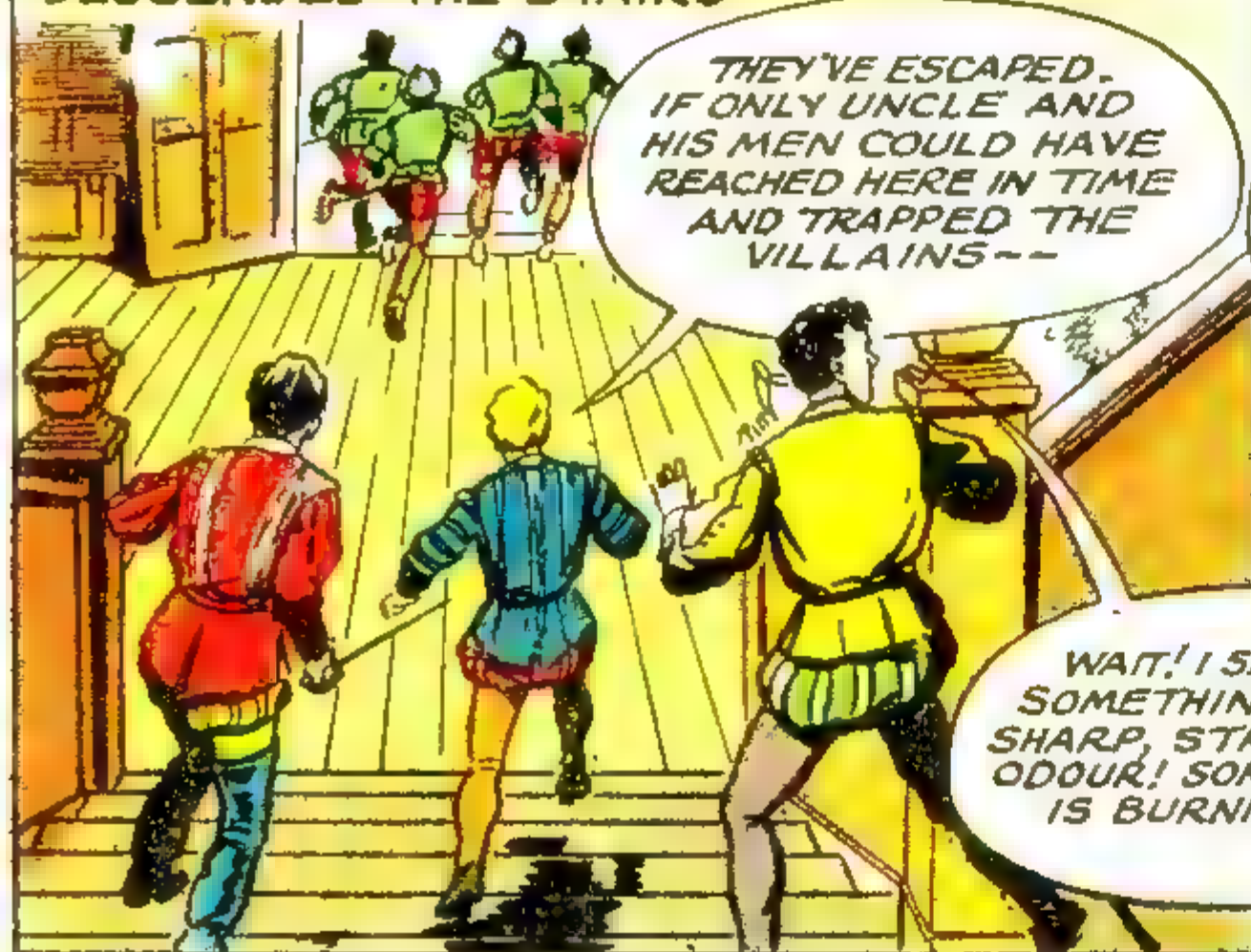
CAPITANO!
THE ENGLISH ARE
COMING! MANY
HORSEMEN ARE
RIDING THIS
WAY!

THE SPANISH CAPTAIN QUIVERED
WITH RAGE



A THOUSAND
CURSES! SO THERE'LL
BE NO LOOT. BUT AT
LEAST WE'LL BLOW
THIS INFERNAL PLACE
ASUNDER. LIGHT
THE FUSES!

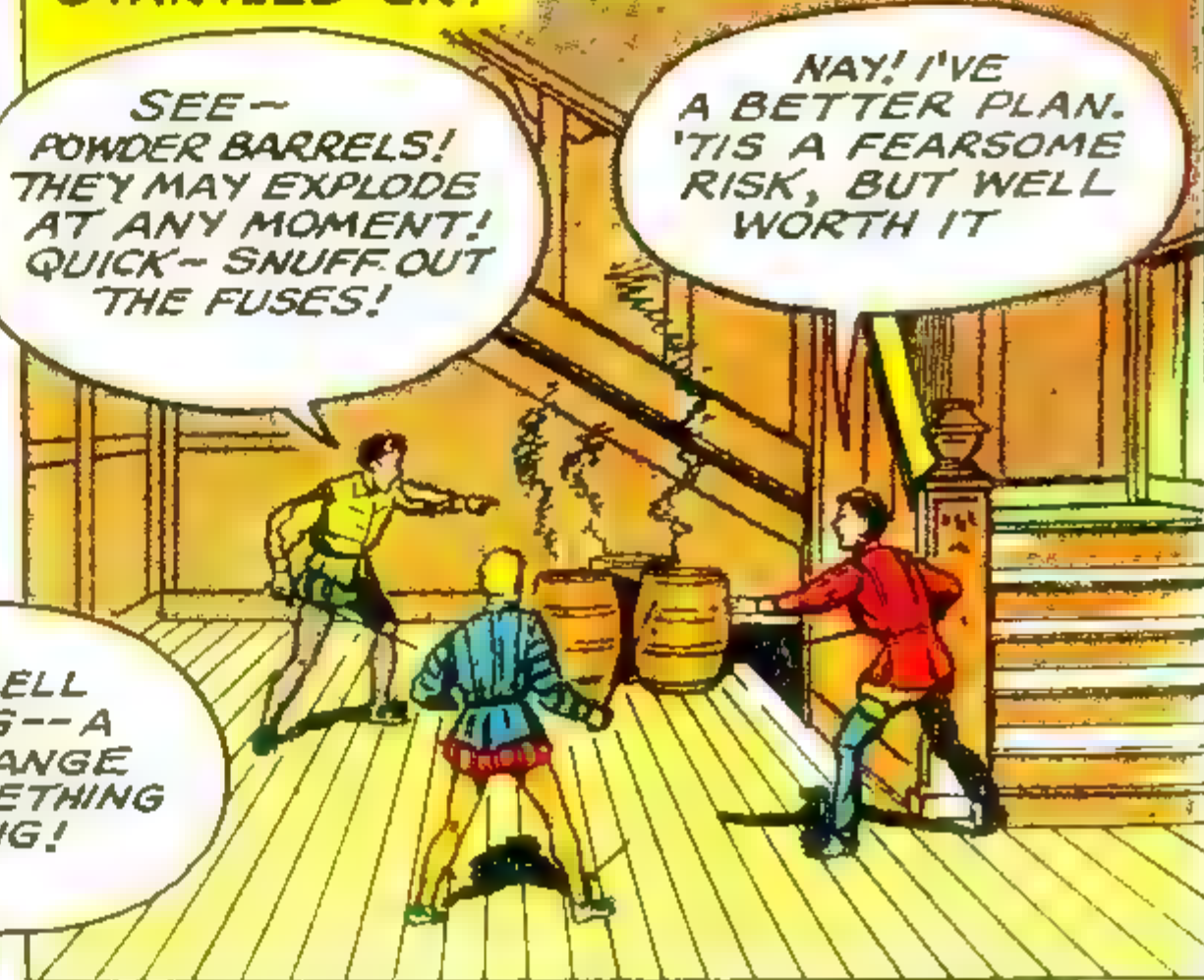
AS THE SPANIARDS FLED FROM THE
HOUSE, PAUL AND HIS BROTHERS
DESCENDED THE STAIRS



THEY'VE ESCAPED.
IF ONLY UNCLE AND
HIS MEN COULD HAVE
REACHED HERE IN TIME
AND TRAPPED THE
VILLAINS--

WAIT! I SMELL
SOMETHING-- A
SHARP, STRANGE
ODOUR! SOMETHING
IS BURNING!

ERIC DARTED DOWN AHEAD OF HIS
BROTHERS, THEN GAVE A
STARTLED CRY



SEE--
POWDER BARRELS!
THEY MAY EXPLODE
AT ANY MOMENT!
QUICK-- SNUFF OUT
THE FUSES!

NAY! I'VE
A BETTER PLAN.
'TIS A FEARSOME
RISK, BUT WELL
WORTH IT

PAUL HEAVED THE DEADLY BARRELS
ON THEIR SIDES



OUT WITH THEM!
ACROSS THE COURTYARD
TO THE CLIFF. KEEP
THEM ROLLING. MAKE
HASTE!

I SEE THY
PLAN, PAUL-- BUT
'TIS A RACE AGAINST
DEATH

THE FIZZING BARRELS WERE ROLLED
TO THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF, AND--



OVER
SHE GOES!

NOW YOURS, ERIC.
QUICK! THE FUSES
BURN SHORT!

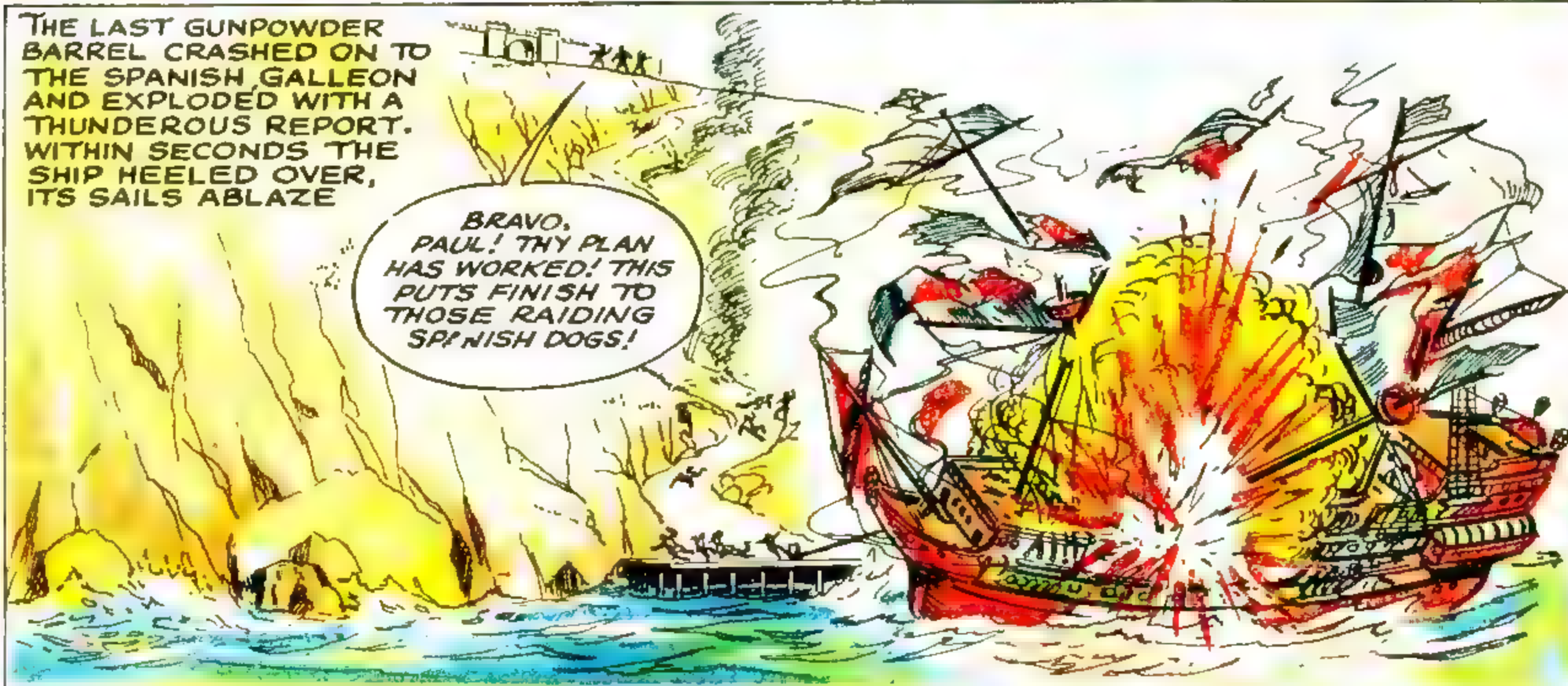
AS THE BARRELS BOUNCED DOWN THE CLIFF-FACE, THE FIRST ONE EXPLODED! TURNING, A SPANIARD LET OUT A YELL



THEN THE SECOND BURST, HURLING AN AVALANCHE OF ROCKS ON TO THE FLEEING ENEMY



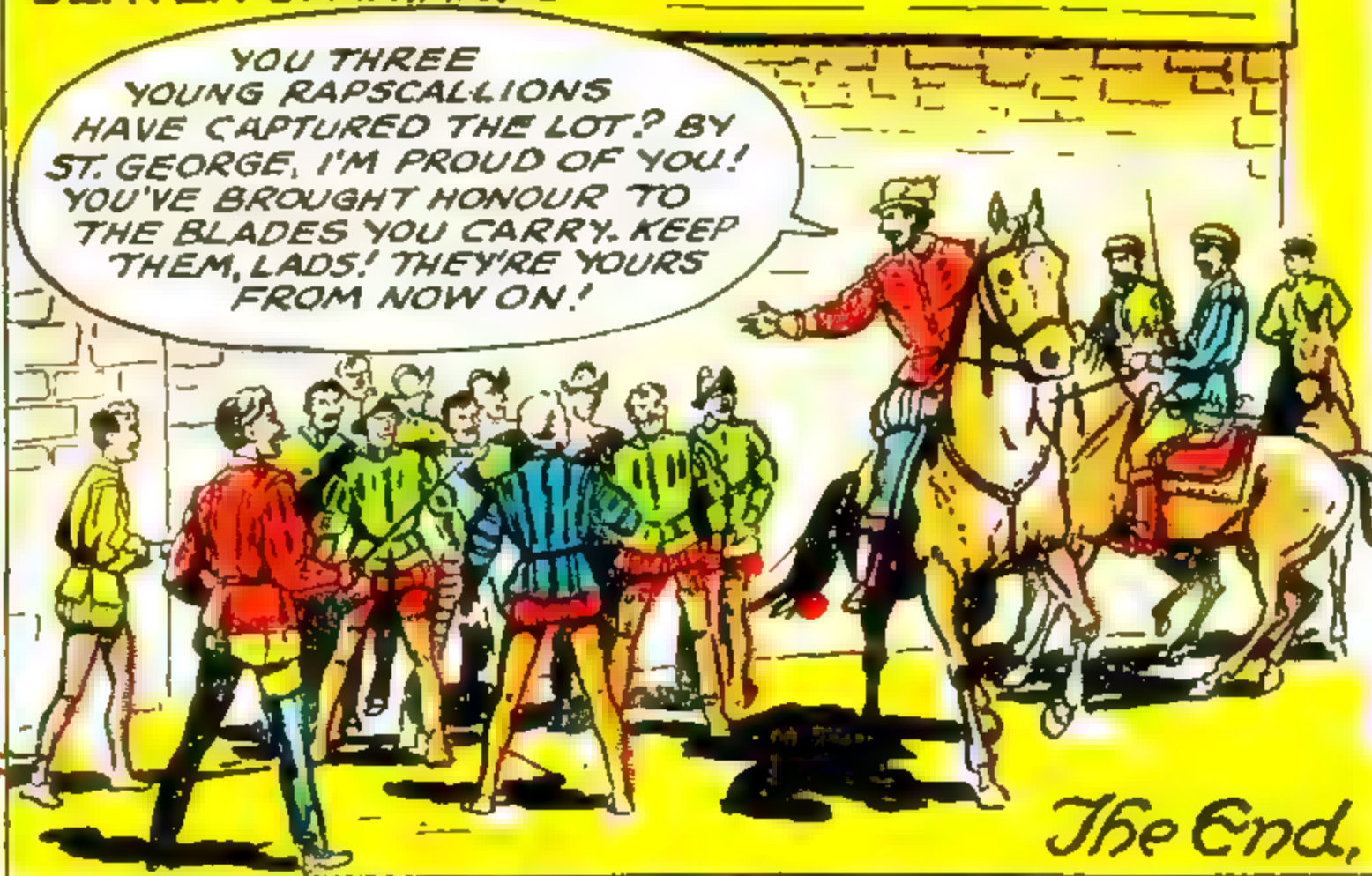
THE LAST GUNPOWDER BARREL CRASHED ON TO THE SPANISH GALLEON AND EXPLODED WITH A THUNDEROUS REPORT. WITHIN SECONDS THE SHIP HEELLED OVER, ITS SAILS ABLAZE



THEN PAUL SPOKE SWIFTLY AND EAGERLY TO HIS BROTHERS

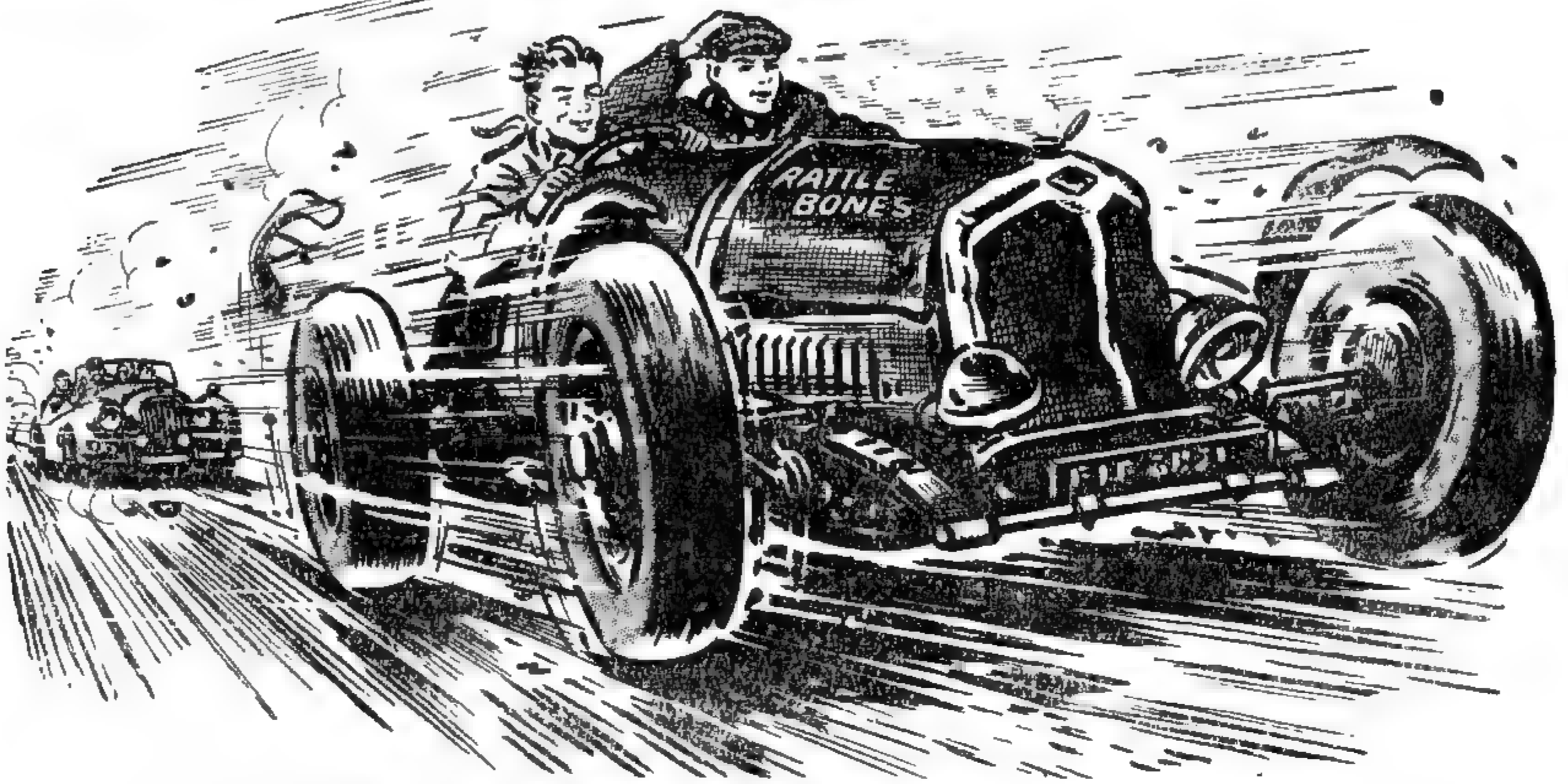


AND WHEN ADMIRAL BURTON ARRIVED, HE FOUND HIS EXCITED NEPHEWS GUARDING A PARTY OF BEATEN SPANIARDS



The End.

The RACE THAT MADE HIM AN ACE !



GONE LIKE A BOMB!

By Ray Buckingham

TED Windsor sat behind the wheel of his ancient car, eyes sparkling and a look of intense delight on his face.

Alongside him, hanging on grimly, was Frosty Payne.

The car was roaring along at break-neck speed, the wind whistling past the pals' ears.

"This is the life!" howled Ted. "One of these days I'll be tearing round the track in a racer!"

Frosty could hardly hear what his pal was saying because of the noise made by Ted's car.

It was a home-made effort, with the name "Rattle-bones" painted on the side. It was well-named, for most of the components were twenty years old.

The magneto was rather older, but one wheel was a replacement that had only seen ten years service. The majority of the parts had come from cars that had been deposited on scrap heaps.

Ted had ridden as passenger in his father's racing 500 c.c., but it was his great ambition to become a racing driver himself. That big thrill, however, didn't look like coming his way for years.

"Hang on," howled Ted to Frosty as he took an open curve.

Frosty, his teeth set, hung on to the small door. The car got round the bend well enough, with a faint zip of the tyres; for the speed was not as great as the optimistic speedometer suggested.

What made the car appear so fast was the absence of any kind of windscreen. At forty-five miles an hour a screeching gale seemed to be blowing, and the smell of hot oil and exhaust fumes that were mixed with it gave a real motor-racing flavour.

Suddenly Frosty nearly fell out.

"Hang on!" howled Ted.

"I am hanging on," yelled Frosty.

Unfortunately the door he was hanging on to had come off its hinges, and was being caught by the wind like a sail. Frosty would have done better not to hang on to it. Luckily he realised that and let go quickly.

"Stop!" yelled Frosty.

Ted applied the brakes. They worked more efficiently than anything else on the car; for his father, a racing driver, had personally supervised the brakes and steering himself.

"Gosh, you've busted that door!" said Ted, amazed.

"It's in the road," snorted Frosty. "I told you the catch ought to have been wired on."

Ted reversed the car to within a foot of the door.

"If you ask me," he said, "it looks better without the door."

"Then what keeps me in?" demanded Frosty.

"If you can't stay in a racer without a door to hold you in, old man, you'd better ride pillion on

Tearaway Ted's Car was Made Only of "Bits and Pieces"—but Isn't it a Flier!

your sister's push bike," retorted Ted. "I'll take this door off too, and we'll put them in the boot."

But actually he didn't want to stop to do it then, for he was planning to take the car up Snake Hill.

"Pretty fruity exhaust, eh?" Ted went on, his eyes sparkling. "I reckon it might stand a chance in a Veteran Sports Cars Race, you know. Wish Dad would let me enter it."

"It's easy enough to enter it," said Frosty, with a grin.

"How?" asked Ted eagerly.

"It hasn't got a door. Ha! ha!"

Ted gave his humorous pal a withering look. Ted took Rattlebones seriously, even though it was generally regarded by some of his pals—and all his personal enemies—as a joke.

Happening to look back down the road, Ted gave a sudden start.

"Gosh! Here comes Lancelot Maunders in his father's Tiger Super Sports."

"Wave him on," said Frosty.

"Wave him on nothing," snorted Ted. "He can't drive for toffee apples. The car's fast, but Lance hasn't the skill or the nerve to handle it. If I can get to Snake Hill first he won't be able to pass me."

"Not if you leave the same thick oil cloud behind you as you did last time," said Frosty with a grin.

Ted did not answer. He sent Rattlebones screeching forward in second gear. When it sounded as though the engine was about to fly to bits, he slammed into third gear, with no more than a pitiful shriek of protest from the box. Then he let the engine go to its limit—or a little more it seemed to Frosty, who put his hands over his ears.

"Ease up! I don't want to get a piston in the teeth!" he howled.

But Ted had no intention of easing up—not until he saw a police car parked at the road ahead. It went against the grain to slow up; but he had been warned by his Dad that he would have to pay his own fines—and that if he got into trouble with the police he might be forbidden to drive Rattlebones except on closed circuits.

"I'll shut off the engine. The exhaust is a bit noisy," said Ted with a grin.

He had knocked out the remaining baffle plates in the silencer, and unintentionally some of the silencer, too, owing to its rusty old-age.

No sooner did he switch off the engine than an appalling unracer-like noise arose. It sounded as if tin cans were being dragged along the road, or an ironmonger's shop was being shaken by an earthquake.

"Gosh," gasped Ted in dismay.

"It's falling to bits," yelled Frosty. "It'll be a three-wheeler any minute now——"

One of the policemen held up his hand, and Ted

stopped the car. He stopped it well short of the policeman just to show his mastery of the car—and the noise stopped.

"Hullo, what's all this?" asked the policeman, frowning. "Are you towing half a dozen buckets? Or is it just the engine?"

"The engine? It's as sweet as a bell," cried Ted wrathfully.

He switched on and opened up.

Luckily, before the policeman could comment on the exhaust noise, Lancelot Maunders drew up. Four grinning faces peered at Ted.

"Want a tow?" asked Lancelot. "We heard it all happening when we were a mile back. What fell off?"

"Nothing," snapped Ted.

The constable had stooped down to look under Rattlebones. Suddenly he gave a hearty guffaw.

"Son," he said jovially, his eyes twinkling. "your tool kit's trailing."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lancelot and his pals.

"This is much better than a Musical Hall turn," gurgled Lancelot. "Every time the engine starts something else falls off."

Ted scrambled from Rattlebones and peered underneath. What he saw made him gasp. Hanging under the car were spanners secured to various parts of the chassis with wire—and not only spanners but cigarette tins, a small rusty bucket half full of stones, and a cow bell without a clapper.

Owing to the roar of the wind and the exhaust he hadn't heard the jingle-jangle himself, although passers-by most certainly had!

Ted wrenched them off, and then turned to Lancelot and his pals. They were helpless with laughter, rolling in their seats and hooting.

"So it was you who tied them there!" snapped Ted, his eyes glinting.

"It was! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Frosty—give me a hand," called Ted.

He gathered all the tin cans and spanners, and before Lancelot realised what was happening, he had opened the boot of the Tiger and thrown them all in. Then he slammed down the lid.

The boot had not been locked, and the key was not in the lock. Ted knew Lancelot's lazy, casual habits. Lancelot would not know if the key was there or not.

"Take them out," shouted Lancelot in wrath, scrambling up.

"Do you want the key?" asked Ted.

He had concealed a small spanner in his hand, and now, as Lancelot approached, he hurled it over the hedge.

"Fetch it," he grinned.

He rushed across the road and into Rattlebones. The policeman had nothing against Ted, and stood grinning as he started the engine and made off.

Rattlebones was quieter now—except for the exhaust and engine noise. Forgetting how near the police were, Ted gave his car the gun.

Rattlebones rushed for Snake Hill. There was some smoke trailing behind, but only a bluish haze, and not an impenetrable haze. If Lancelot wanted to pass, he could not claim he was fog bound in the rear.

"Take it easy," warned Frosty.

Ted was not being reckless, nor was he driving dangerously fast. With Rattlebones that would only be possible down a long steep hill in neutral, when gravity hadn't to compete with the friction of the engine.

Far behind was the Tiger, that dark red shiny super sports car with glinting chromium and everything that money could buy in the form of fog lamps, kerb lamps, extra horns, badges, mascots and gadgets. When well driven it was fast, and it should have overtaken and passed ramshackle Rattlebones with ease. But Ted was getting the very utmost from his car.

"Going like a bomb," he told Frosty.

He climbed the hill, with the Tiger catching him up fast. Ahead lay a long straight road over the moors with a downhill approach. This was it. This was where Rattlebones would touch sixty—with the bent speedometer needle clocking eighty-five.

Behind Rattlebones, Lancelot sat at the wheel of the Tiger, his eyes glinting and his lips curled in a smile.

"Go on, pass!" urged one of his pals.

"Not me. Ted thinks he's outpacing me. He'll go faster and faster—sixty, perhaps sixty-one, or even two, and then—BANG!"

Ted look back through his shivering, dithering rear view mirror.

"He can't do it," he yelled to Frosty in joy. "He wants to pass, but he hasn't the nerve. Bet we touch seventy——"

It was only a moment later that there was a violent jangling and clanking, and the engine stopped with such suddenness that it was as if all the brakes had been slammed on. Ted put out the clutch, and the car coasted on.

Lancelot shot past, accelerating as hard as he could, disappearing rapidly into the distance.

Only then did it dawn on Ted that he had been fooled—tricked into driving Rattlebones faster than its metal could possibly stand.

He climbed out fearfully, and opened the bonnet. His face paled. Frosty, looking over his shoulder, whistled as he saw a hole in the crankcase through which oil was pouring, and noticed a con. rod projecting through the metal.

"Went like a bomb," he said with a wry grin. "Bang!"

Ted couldn't speak. This was the end.

"What now?" asked Frosty. "The only thing I can suggest is to leave it here. We can wheel it into that field. It's not worth the expense of towing it home."

Ted set his jaw.

"What? Leave Rattlebones? Never! This is the only car I'm likely to have for years, and I've got to have a car to practise on."

"Practise what on? Blowing up engines?" asked Frosty.

"No, practise driving. Before this year's out I'll be driving a racing car—yes, and winning races," said Ted. "Come on, Frosty. I know where I can get a spare engine from a derelict car. There's nothing much wrong with this except a wrecked crankcase and a few con. rods, a piston or two, and perhaps some valves——"

"And crankshaft," nodded Frosty. "You ought to be able to build another car around that horn——"

Ted did not answer. He was going to have his car towed home, and he knew how.

TOUGH LUCK FOR TED

TED Windsor's father went to the front gate of his house and looked anxiously down the road. There was no sign of Ted. A skilled racing driver himself, Mr. Windsor was ready to foster Ted's ambition, but he knew that Ted had a long way to go yet.

Mr. Windsor ran a garage in the town, and that alone enabled Ted to keep Rattlebones going. Ted was allowed the use of his father's tools and equipment, within reason. Being a skilled mechanic, he could tackle almost any job successfully, but he had to learn to walk before he could run, as his Dad often said.

Mr. Windsor's racing mechanic, Sid Bates, was standing by, hands in overall pockets.

"Hope he hasn't run the car off the road, Guv," he said.

"Hope not. He's long overdue, and his supper's cold," grunted Mr. Windsor.

The he saw Lancelot Maunders driving the Tiger Super Sports, and signalled to him.

Lancelot pulled across the road and halted.

"Ted's coming along, sir," he said smoothly. "Car seems to be running quieter than usual."

"He's done a lot of work on it," nodded Sid. "It's quite a bit faster too."

"Definitely," said Lancelot solemnly. "Only very speedy cyclists are overtaking him now. Wish you luck in the Gold Cup Race on Saturday, sir," he added politely. "I suppose you'll be driving?"

"Yes——and we'll win," nodded Sid.

"I'll be there," said Lancelot. "Matter of fact I'll be driving."

Ted's father gave a start.

"You—driving in the race?" he exclaimed.

Lancelot, who was a year and half older than Ted, nodded.

"Yes. My father has just bought me a 500 c.c. racer," he said. "A Dragonfly."

"Dragonfly? One of the new super jobs?" said Ted's father, amazed. "You'd better be careful with it. You haven't had any racing practice, and that car's really fast—and a bit deceptive on bends for a novice."

Lancelot gave a short laugh.

"I've been practising," he said.

He drove off, and almost at once Ted's father heard shouts and laughter. A crowd of young fellows came into view, some in mechanics' overalls. They were workmates and friends of Ted's.

Next moment a clomping farm horse came trotting along the road.

"Ted!" gasped Mr. Windsor.

Towed behind the horse was Rattlebones, with Ted at the wheel. Cyclists were riding behind and alongside, and the crowd was extremely hilarious.

"Gosh what a race," chuckled one fellow. "Bet Ted overtakes the horse next time round——"

"Why don't you enter Rattlebones for next year's Derby, Ted?"

"Gosh! What speed for one-horse power, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ted sat with a feeble grin, his face fiery red. It was pretty humiliating; but it had been a question either of being towed cheaply by a horse or leaving Rattlebones behind.

Mr. Windsor gave a dry chuckle as the grinning farmhand with the horse called "whoa" and humorously gave the stop signal.

Out scrambled Ted, and paid him off.

"Tough luck," said his father.

"That's all right, Dad. I'll give them something to cheer about one day," said Ted gamely. "And it'll be a real engine with real punch pulling me along."

Off clattered the horse, and the crowd encircled the car.

"Stand back," commanded Frosty in pretended wrath. "No prying into that bonnet to see the secret design—our open-air crankcase."

Ted's father helped him push the car into the garage, and the crowd dispersed, having enjoyed the joke to the full.

"It was my fault, Dad," grunted Ted, "not the car's. Lancelot stayed just behind and tempted me to go too fast for the engine——"

"That's an old racing trick," nodded his father. "Well, if he tries it against me in the Gold Cup he'll have some surprises."

Ted gave a start, and stared at him in amazement.

"In the Gold Cup Race on Saturday?" he gasped.

"But Lancelot won't be driving?"

"He will. His rich father has more money than sense. He has bought him a Dragonfly."

Ted whistled. He knew the Dragonfly, a really speedy track-burner.

"Gosh! What wouldn't I give—I—I suppose Dad——?"

"No, Ted. You drive well, and perhaps you could handle a car in a race; but I want you to learn to walk before you run, and to handle a sports car before you tackle a racer. Oh, you're good—but you'll be better. If Lancelot really lets that car out, he'll be driving it beyond his skill——"

"He won't," said Ted with assurance. "He's a lucky chap! I envy him his luck; but it's not jealousy when I say he hasn't the nerve for racing. Anyway, we'll see."

Ted had the good sense not to make too pointed comments about Lancelot's driving when it became the subject of talk during the week.

Everyone knew that Ted would have sacrificed everything to have a wheel in that race on Saturday, but, as Frosty said, a chap can't race alone. He has to have a car, however good a driver he may be.

Ted couldn't afford a car, and not even in his wildest dreams did he imagine that anyone would lend him one.

"Gosh, Frosty," he sighed one lunch-time, when they were eating well-oiled sandwiches and iron filings as they repaired Rattlebones, "if I could win just one race I'd be happy. Because then, I reckon, Dad would let me have a real chance by giving me permission to drive his car."

But that was not likely to happen, as he knew. And when on the Friday his father drove off with the special racing Five Hundred in the van, Ted waved him good-bye and wished him good luck.

"I'll be there to see you win to-morrow, Dad," he said. "Rattlebones will be running again with the replacement engine."

And Rattlebones was ready too. It was a hundred miles run to the Circuit, and Ted was up early enough to allow himself plenty of time.

He was just warming up Rattlebones when Frosty gave a shout.

"Telegram for you, Ted."

Ted took it, hoping it was not bad news—that nothing had happened to his father. The telegram was indeed from his Dad, but the news was the last thing Ted had expected.

"Gosh!" he yelled.

"What's up?" asked Frosty.

Ted's face split into a grin, and he grabbed his pal and began to waltz him around.

"Read it," he yelled, thrusting the telegram into Frosty's hands.

Frosty read it with goggling eyes:

"WANT YOU FOR SPARE DRIVER FOR GOLD CUP—COME WITH RACING OVER—"

ALLS, HELMET, VISOR, DON'T FORGET BADGE."

Ted hurled himself indoors, collected helmet, visor, goggles and the special badge worn by competitors to get through to the pits.

"This is it!" he gasped.

He drove to the circuit as if in a dream. He had never driven better, and he was careful not to go too fast for the engine. He felt as cool as ice and fully confident.

"I'll be racing against Lancelot," he told Frosty. "Even if I can't win I'll beat him."

"Sure! But what's the idea of wanting a spare driver? It's a shortish race," said Frosty, puzzled. "Only two hundred miles."

Ted was not worrying about that. If his Dad, for any reason at all, wanted a spare driver, Ted was all ready to take on the job.

Ted, in Rattlebones, rattled on to the course half an hour before the race was due to start. Rattlebones was painted racing green, had a strap over the bonnet—to keep the pistons in, said Frosty—and carried a Competitors' badge proudly.

"Competitor? What in? A Veterans' Race?" said someone in the Car Park.

"It's for next Saturday's race. He's being allowed to start to-day," said a wag.

Ted ignored them, and, carrying crash-helmet, visor, and white racing overalls, strode excitedly towards the repair pits from which came the shrill snarl of racing engines.

Already the car park was packed; the crowd was swarming in, and growing rapidly. The pits were a scene of almost feverish activity as last minute adjustments were being made.

At the end was the Windsor pit, and Ted saw his Dad, in white overalls and crash-helmet with the gold cross, putting finishing touches to his car.

"Ted?" said his Dad, staring at Ted's crash helmet. "What's this? You're not driving, surely?"

"Not driving? I'm your spare, Dad," said Ted taken aback.

"My spare! What do you mean?" his father asked.

"Why, the—the telegram, Dad," said Ted staring.

"Telegram? What telegram?"

Ted's heart gave a jump as he saw his father's puzzled frown. Then he pulled the telegram from his pocket and passed it over. Immediately his father's expression and the way his eyebrows shot up told Ted that something was wrong.

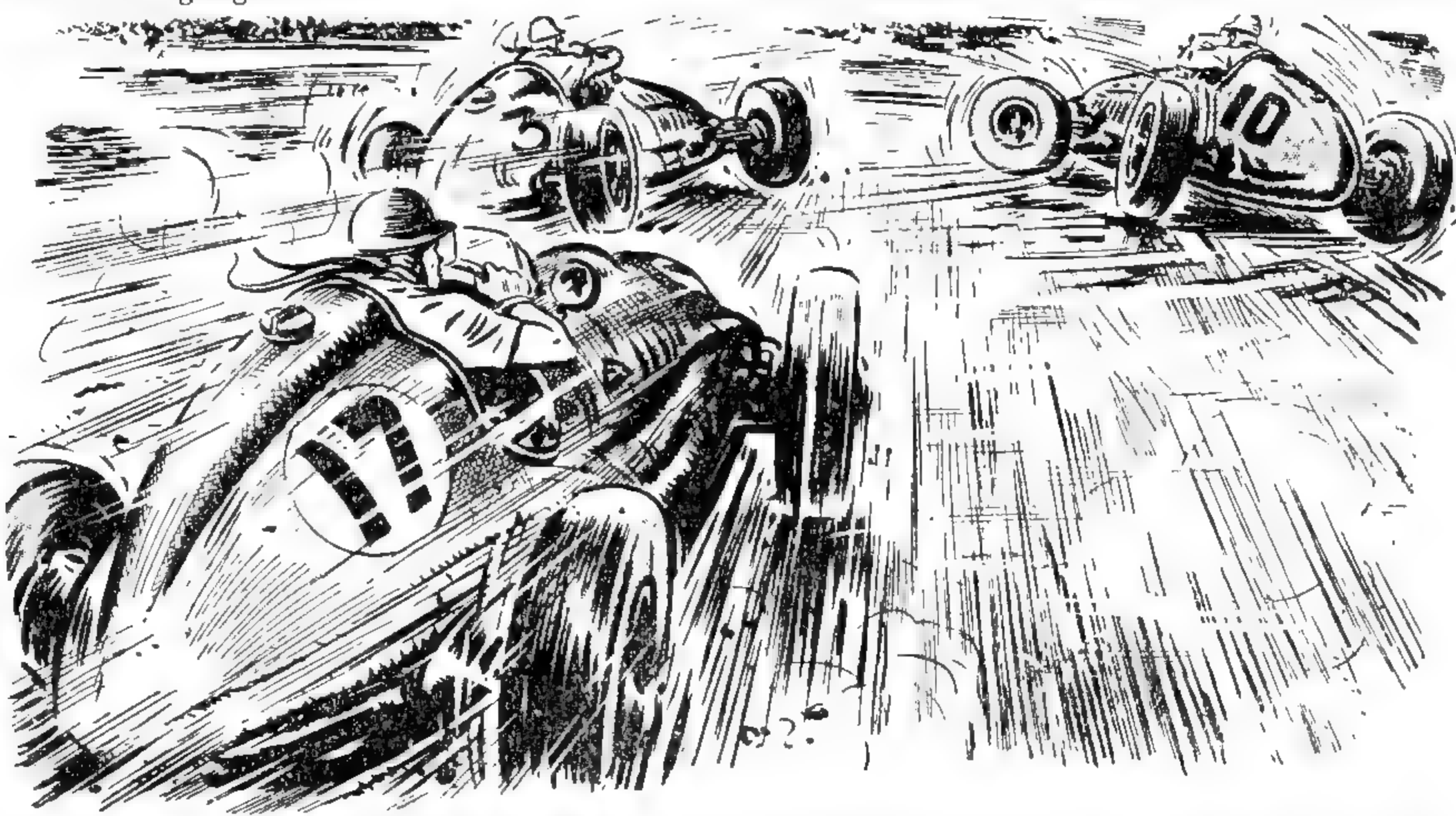
"Ted, lad," said his father in kindly, compassionate tone, crumpling the yellow form into a ball. "You've been hoaxed. I didn't send this telegram at all."

Ted stood speechless, his cheeks red, his heart down in his boots.

"You—you mean it—it's a leg pull?" he choked.

"I'm sorry lad, but I'm afraid it is," was the answer.

Ted stood silent. What a fool he had been! He



Out of control, the two leading cars careered towards one another. Ted, following up, saw his chance. Ramming the accelerator pedal to the floor, he sent his rocketing racer flat-out for the narrowing gap ahead. Would he succeed in his daring bid to win the race?

had banked so much on getting his great chance at last.

And now all his hopes had been dashed ruthlessly to the ground!

LAST LAUGH ON LANCELOT

AT that moment a bright green Five Hundred came to the pits with exhaust blaring. At the wheel sat Lancelot, in a red and gold crash helmet, and wearing overalls with gold braid.

"Hullo. You driving?" he asked Ted as he braked the car.

"If you're entering Rattlebones you'd better get started. The others will be off in half an hour. Got the horse with you?"

Ted clenched his fists. Fury seized him as he realised that the telegram that had so boosted his hopes must have been sent by Lancelot.

"Steady, Ted," warned his father. "You may have the last laugh before the day's over—if Lancelot starts in this race."

Lancelot scowled, and with screeching tyres as he let in the clutch, carelessly snaked off.

If Lancelot had dared tell the truth he would have admitted he was scared. The car was too fast. Twice in practice he had arrived at hair-raising speed at a bend with his heart thumping madly.

Only his overwhelming vanity prevented him from scratching from the race. But even if he did start, his secret plan was to do a flashy lap or two, and then burn out the clutch by slipping it. This would give him an excuse for retiring early.

Frosty gave Ted what consolation he could, but he could see that the disappointment had gone deep. Ted cheered up a little, however, when he was allowed to stay in his father's pit, and lend a hand.

The Gold Cup was a two hundred mile race, and when the cars lined up, Ted had a feeling his father would win. But his Dad was matched against the new Dragonflies, and they were reputed to be unusually fast, with that little extra something in reserve.

Ted held his breath as the racing engines screeched when the starter's flag went up. Then it came down and the bunch shot away, his father in the lead.

Battling with him for mastery were two of England's star drivers, and an Italian, Bozetti, new to Five Hundred racing but a Grand Prix ace.

Round they came for the first lap. Ted's Dad was leading; the two other English drivers were second and third, and the Italian fourth. Three laps later it seemed that Lancelot was leading—until the whole pack screeched past him and it was apparent that he had been lapped. He had appeared to be ahead only because he was just completing one lap when the others were starting the next!

Then suddenly a murmur came from the crowd. The cars had bunched at a bend, and two had

skidded. Ted, jumping on to the pit counter, saw his father pulling his car straight with the Italian ahead. Round they came, but, while the leaders went on, Ted's father swung in to the pit.

"What's wrong, Dad?" asked Ted.

In horror he saw a hole in his father's vizor and a streak of blood trickling down his father's face. Sid, over the counter in a flash, helped the driver from the car.

"Stone—stone flew up—stunned," said Ted's Dad in a shaky voice.

He was still half stunned; for the stone had got him just above the right temple where the helmet did not protect him. It was a freak, unlucky hit.

"Carry on—we've got to win—carry on," his father muttered.

"You mean—me, Dad?" asked Ted.

He thought his father nodded, and with no further ado Ted slapped on his helmet and vizor, and dropped into the driving seat. He had driven the car before at home on a disused airfield when his father had practised—although he had not been allowed to go fast. But now—now he was Stand In driver, and he had to win!

Ted shot away from the mark and the crowd cheered, not yet realising there had been a change of drivers.

Arriving at the first bend, Ted knew instinctively what line to take. He had thought of nothing but motor-racing in his spare time; he had studied it in theory, and had listened to his father's comments. Rattlebones' queer tricks had also taught him plenty.

At first he went warily, following the car in front without attempting to pass it.

He did not realise that the car in front was being driven by the Italian, Bozetti. He was too concerned with his own driving to worry whose car it was.

Ted hung on. He could just keep pace with the leading car, and by following it through the bends he found he could keep station.

The Italian flashed past a laggard car down the straight, and Ted went past like a bullet, too. He hadn't time to look properly, but he caught a glimpse of Lancelot's face.

Lancelot, with a swift glance, saw who it was at the wheel of No. 17. Ted! Suddenly gritting his teeth, he speeded up.

In the pits, Sid and Frosty stood side by side.

"He'll never make it surely," said Sid. "Hey—can this be? It—it's Ted—and he's holding Bozetti——"

Three laps—four—and Ted was still behind Bozetti, tailing him and getting the benefit of his slip stream. The speed seemed terrific. It was the biggest thrill of his life. The snarling, crackling engine, the smell of hot racing oil and dope—the genuine punch in the back as he opened up—this was the greatest Sport of them all!

Lancelot, spurting to catch him, over-shot a bend wildly, and spun. As he came back, Bozetti went by, and then Ted, only yards behind.

As he flashed by his pit, Ted saw the blackboard on which was chalked his position in the race. Fourth. He flashed a look and blinked. Fourth? He was fourth! And there were twelve cars in the race.

The collision at the bend when the stone had hit his father had slowed the field, and Ted had leaped into the car so quickly that he had been off and away before the back markers had caught up.

True the two English aces were well ahead, but Bozetti was gaining, and Ted gained with him, not fully realising that he was putting up first class lap times.

Bozetti was a master, and by following his course Ted found that he could take the bends at terrific speed in safety. He was lapping at eighty-four miles an hour!

As he flashed by the pits with only three laps to go, still lying fourth, his father, who had now completely recovered, staggered to the counter.

"Sid's doing well, eh?" he said. "Where's No. 17?"

"Fourth," said Sid at his side.

"I didn't know he could drive like that," said Ted's father, turning to him.

Then he saw that he was talking to Sid!

"It's Ted driving," said Sid. "Didn't you know?"

"Ted driving?" his father gasped. "It can't be! What speed is he lapping at?"

"Eighty-four—same as Bozetti."

"What? Flag him in! He'll be killed, the young idiot. Flag him in!" cried Ted's father.

"There's only two laps to go, sir," said Frosty in a thrilled tone. "And the leading car's come in with an oil pipe fractured——"

Ted's father stared at the cars—then at the lap scoring and the watches. Past the pits at terrific speed came the leading car—and then, catching it, Bozetti. Almost at once No. 17 shrieked by with Ted giving the thumbs-up O.K. signal.

"He's third," yelled Frosty. "And gosh—where's Lancelot Maunders?"

"I can just see the tail of his car sticking out of the far-side ditch," said Sid, looking through field glasses. "I think he's in the tree. But he seems all right."

Ted, seeing Bozetti get away, went faster. He went a shade too fast as the master did a beautiful four wheel drift, but Ted steered by instinct, co-ordinating throttle and wheel, and went through safely.

Bozetti was catching up with the leader, and Ted was not far behind.

Now they were heading for the bend, and the last lap. Bozetti was on the leader's tail. He made to

cut through on the inside, and their wheels touched. The English ace's car spun; Bozetti travelled sideways with tyre rubber burning—and Ted, with his hair standing on end, saw he had only just room if he was quick.

He opened up, and shot between the two at well over the hundred, accelerating fast.

Ted went through the next bends with the nervous tension but sure skill of a trapeze artist dicing with death. As he screeched past the pits he saw the man with the checkered flag.

"He's won!" yelled Frosty, clasp ing Sid.

"He's won!" gasped Ted's Dad, astounded.

Down the straight, hot after Ted, came the English ace and Bozetti with hardly a yard between them, catching Ted—but too late. He had won!

Ted, a garland of roses round his neck, sat beaming in No. 17 as the cameras clicked and the crowd cheered. He had won the Gold Cup. And if it was the collision of the aces which had given him the chance, nevertheless he had taken it!

"Who laughs last, laughs best, eh?" grinned Frosty, as a crowd of their pals who had enjoyed the fun of the one-horse tow came rushing up, eager to thump Ted's back, and congratulate him.

"What happened to Lancelot?" asked Ted.

"He's been made a branch manager," said Frosty.

"Branch manager—what of?" asked Ted.

"One of the trees here. He was just managing a branch nicely. I think he forgot to turn the steering wheel at a bend," said Frosty.

"The car climbed a tree. But he's all right. There's nothing broken although, the grin got knocked off his face by a passing twig!" echoed Sid.

When Ted met Lancelot after the race he thanked him for the telegram, explaining that but for that he might not have arrived on time.

Then Ted dismissed Lancelot from his mind. He reckoned he had settled that account. Now he had no thoughts for anything but races to come. It was a proud moment for him when Bozetti and the English aces congratulated him. But the proudest moment of all was when he heard his Dad say that he should race again and be given a chance to repeat his triumph.

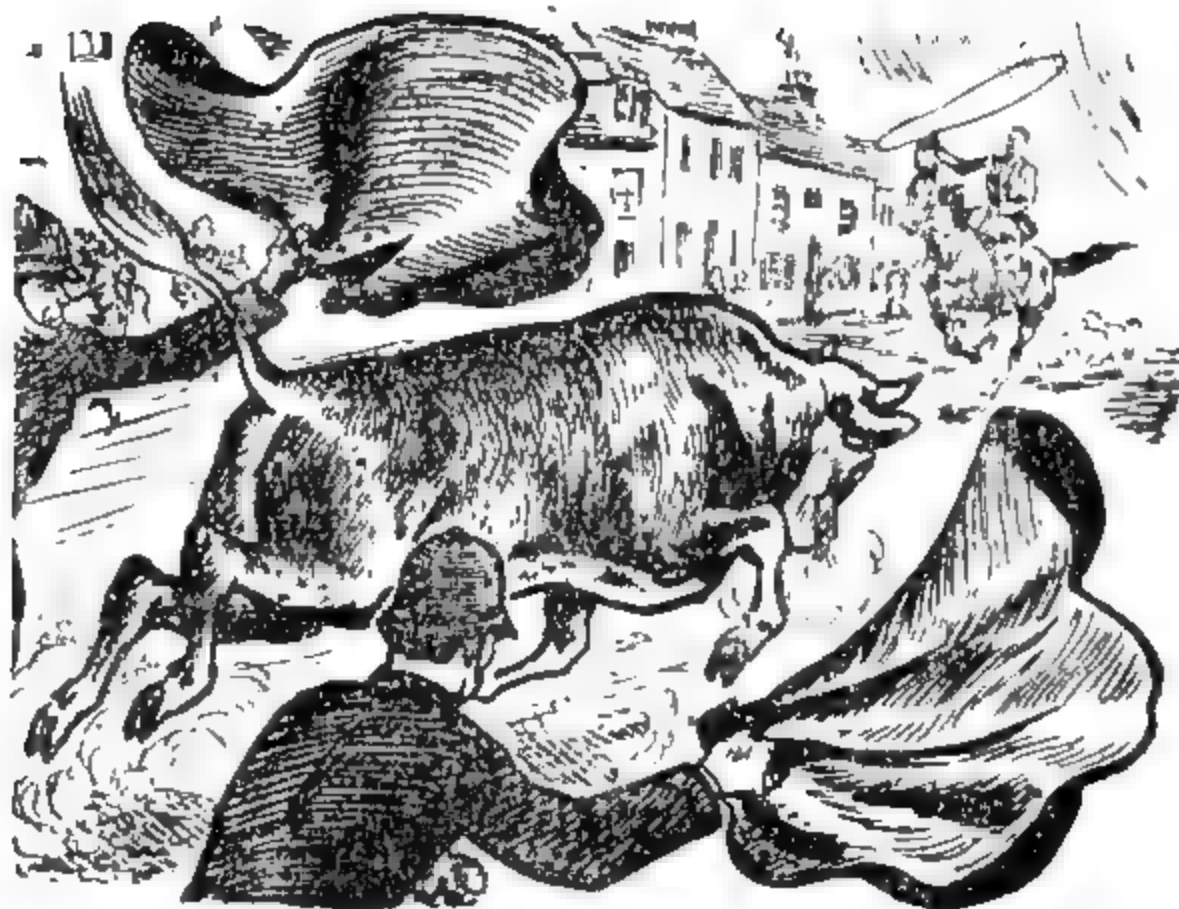
It might have seemed a come-down to many who saw him climb into Rattlebones to leave the race track, but Ted gave the old car an affectionate pat.

"With the prize money I'll get you four new carburettors, Rattlebones," he said. "And a high lift camshaft and special cylinder head."

"Good for you," said Frosty in glee. "A new crankshaft and con.-rods and pistons, and the old engine will be something to write home about. There are some thrilling times ahead, Ted."

How right he was

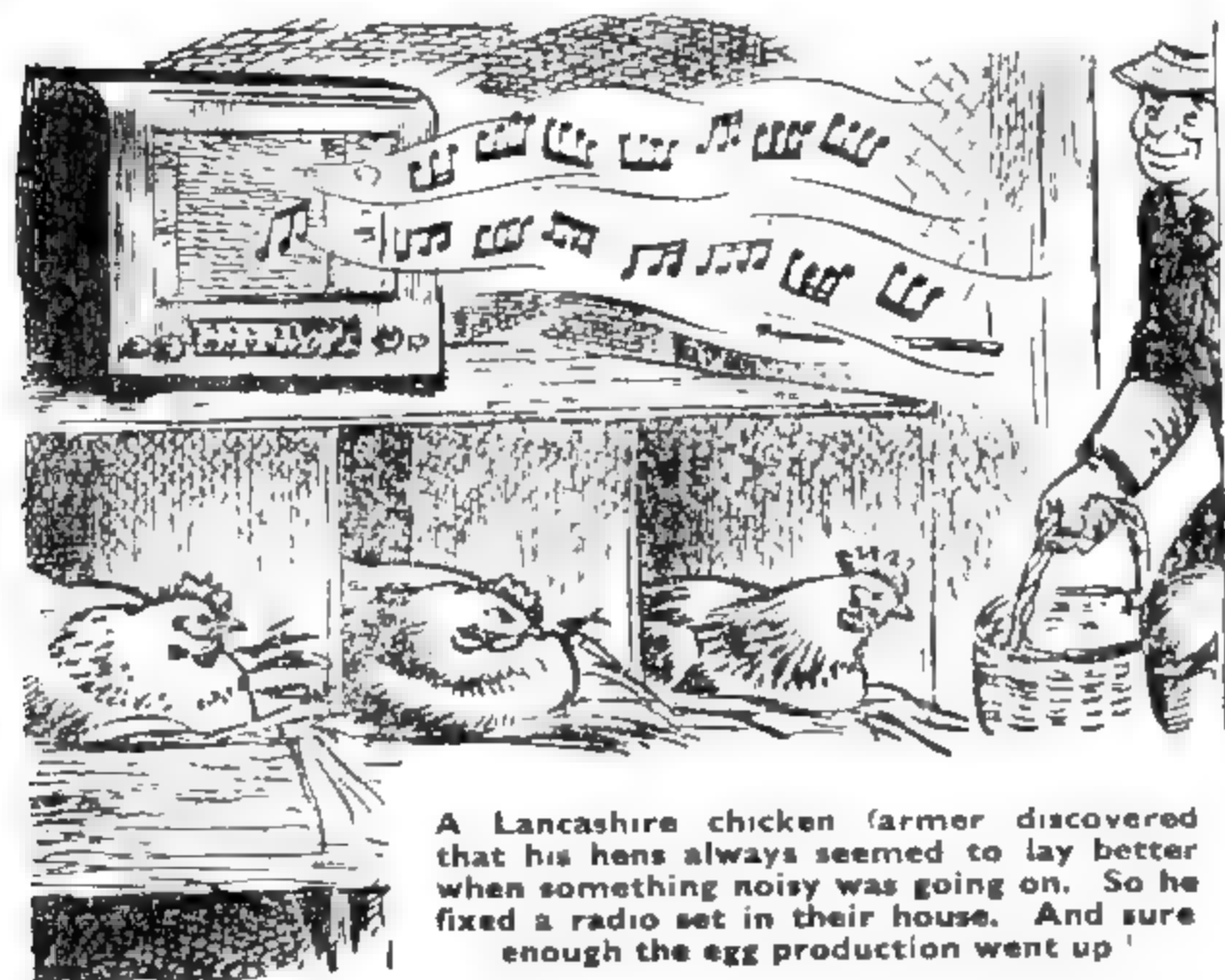
THE END



When a bull ran amok through the streets of a town in Kent, police waved their capes like bull-fighters to drive it away from crowds of frightened people. A man on a horse then made a loop in a length of rope and lassoed the runaway beast. The Wild West had come to England!



A family of cygnets were in danger of being swept to their death over a weir on the River Soar, in Leicestershire. So a quick-thinking villager tied a big ladle to the end of a long pole, and scooped them to safety in the nick of time.



A Lancashire chicken farmer discovered that his hens always seemed to lay better when something noisy was going on. So he fixed a radio set in his house. And sure enough the egg production went up!

BITS and BOBS ABOUT



The parents of a little girl in New South Wales heard her call out during the night. They went to her bedroom—and found a tiger sitting by her bed and licking her face. The tiger had escaped from a circus: it did the child no harm.



The famous breed of pigs known as Large Whites are the descendants of a magnificent specimen owned by a Yorkshire weaver. He and his wife thought so much of it that they used to bath it in a tub in front of the kitchen fire!

BIRDS and BEASTS



People in an Austrian village were astonished to see a man crawling along making a quacking noise and being followed by a file of ducks. It turned out that he was an expert on animal noises and was trying out his skill!



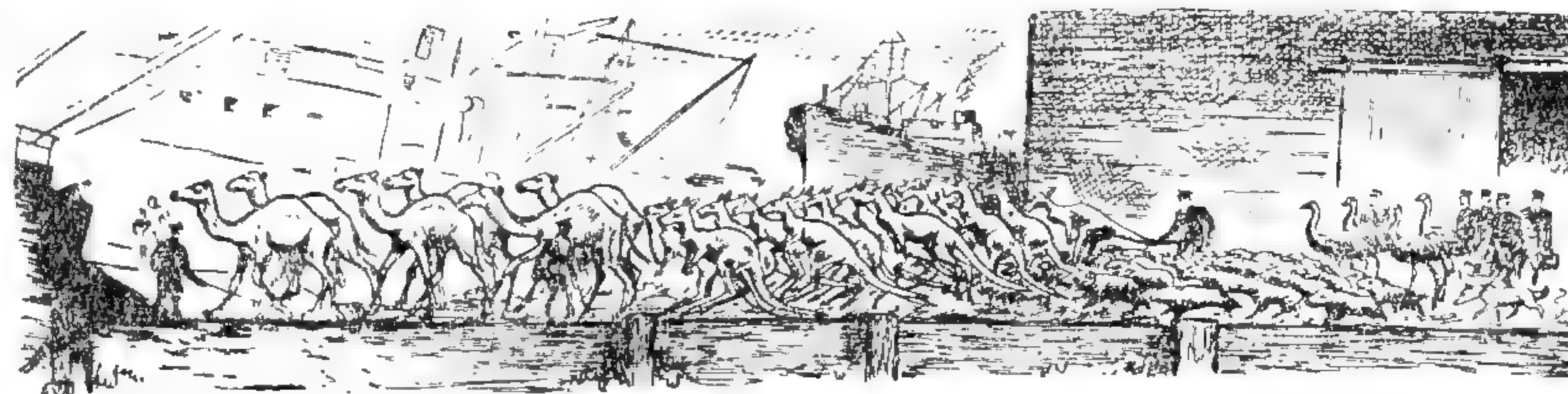
A huge lion pounded from the jungle in East Africa and knocked a passing car clean over. The people in it were terrified. But the lion merely sniffed at them—then looped off!



During a football match between Mansfield and Brentford, the latter team were about to take a corner. Suddenly the referee darted into the goal and fished out a cat. Puss had been sleeping there for a quarter of an hour.



The vicar of a church in Essex wanted to rid the building of a plague of bats. He did the trick by taking his motor-bike inside and roaring the engine. The noise drove out the bats in streams.



A freighter at Port Adelaide took aboard six camels, 50 kangaroos, 40 wombats, four emus, 150 lizards and one dingo, all destined for American zoos. A 20th Century Noah's Ark!

JUNGLE JOE FOILS THE FILM-WRECKER

BY
CLIFF
LEWIS



A NEW JOB FOR JOE

TAKE a pew. You're very welcome." Jungle Joe, warden of one of the biggest wild animal reserves in Africa, gestured to his two friendly American visitors to sit on a fallen tree not far from his bungalow.

Visitors were few in the reserve, and Joe, and his young assistant, Rikky, always treated them to real jungle hospitality.

So did three cheetahs who stretched out near the Americans' feet, purring contentedly like big cats. Any pal of Jungle Joe was a pal of theirs.

The tubby American—Irving Gisberg by name, and a film director by profession—looked from Jungle Joe to Rikky, and sighed.

"You're both a couple of lucky guys if you've never met Hector Bragg, one of the biggest boosters in film business," Irving told the jungle chums feelingly. "He took me in hook, line and sinker. And that's why I signed him on as Wild Animal Adviser for the film we're making in your reserve."

"Now we find that Bragg's hopeless," took up Slim, Irving's lanky camera-man. "He can't handle anything bigger than a dog without a whip and a revolver. His knowledge of the jungle is limited to half-a-dozen big game hunts. And it isn't a hunter we need. We're not making a story-picture. We want real-life Nature shots."

"Animals at play, eh?" nodded Joe. "Very interesting. Now where do I come in?"

The film director answered him.

"Slim here is O.K. at filming anything that's filmable, and his height is useful for getting bird's-eye shots. But he needs a jungle expert who'll fix up ways of helping him to get natural pictures—films where the animals don't even know they're being taken."

"I reckon I could do just that for you," nodded Joe.

"That's just hunky-dory," nodded Irving Gisberg. "You're on the pay-roll, as new Wild Animal Adviser. Mind you, Joe, I can't pay you what you're

Joe is the Rhinos' Pal—Yet They Rebel Against Him! Why?

worth. When I sacked Hector Bragg this morning, he made me settle up according to the terms of the contract—and believe me, he's left me broke."

"Forget the money side of it as far as I'm concerned," Joe declared in his big-hearted way. "If you're able to show millions of people all over the world a film of the fine work of preserving wild life in the jungle, instead of the old stuff of hunting and killing, then that's all the reward that Rikky and I want. But, by the way, where is Hector Bragg now?"

"I don't know—and I don't care," said Slim.

"As soon as we gave him the pay check and his boat ticket to New York he scrambled. Flickering flashlights, we'd better start organising things. There's a heck of a lot of work to do before we even start filming," grunted the film director.

Jungle Joe thumped twinkle-eyed Irving Gisberg on the back.

"Oh, no, there isn't, chum. Rikky and I have spent hours making 'hides' all over the reserve from which we could study the wild animals. We've got tree platforms to watch leopards feeding; hidey-holes in the rocks to watch lionesses and cubs in their dens, and a hollowed-out tree-trunk by the river when we want to brush up our 'crocodile-ography.' Gosh: I almost broke my jaw over that!"

All of them laughed heartily. Joe and Rikky had taken a liking to the two Americans. So, to show them real jungle hospitality, they fixed them up with meals and bunks in the Nook, as their bungalow was called.

Then next day filming began in earnest. And, during the following week, camera-man Slim, with Joe and Rikky's help, did some wonderful filming.

They got excellent pictures of a mother and father leopard romping with their cubs; lions lapping thirstily at their water holes; rhinos taking a bath; crocs scurrying along the jungle river, and then camouflaging themselves as logs when they were disturbed; and many other grand shots.

But unknown to the filmers, a jinx was just round the corner—in the shape of Hector Bragg, the "sacked" Wild Animal Adviser!

PERIL FROM A RHINO-CHARGE

AFTER being paid off by Gisberg, Hector Bragg had cashed his pay-check in Gwali, gone on a spree, visited the race-track and a couple of gambling saloons, and gone broke.

Then, just before he was about to hitch lifts to the port town, and embark on the next boat, he remembered that his film contract had stipulated not only a fat fee, which he had drawn and blown—although he had certainly not earned it!—but also a percentage of the profits made by the film when it was shown at cinemas throughout the world.

So Bragg, feeling that there were more pickings

for him, if he could push his way back into the film outfit, set off into the reserve. He was armed with revolver, rifle, and even shot-gun, because Bragg only felt brave when he had plenty of weapons of destruction with him.

But Bragg, in his conceit, had not reckoned with the fact that the enterprising little film outfit would get on so well without him.

As, mopping his brow, he plodded, under a torrid sun, round the edges of swamps—nibbled by mosquitoes, and jeered at by baboons—he reached the clearing where Jungle Joe, Rikky, Irving and Slim were loading big flat tins into Irving's jeep.

Bragg dodged behind a tree. The monkeys seemed to set up a sort of warning chatter just then, but by straining his ears Hector was able to hear what was being said by Jungle Joe and Co.

"Well, it's all in the can, as we say in the movie business, thanks to you, Jungle Joe," Irving Gisberg breezed jovially. "Those tins contain something more precious than gold—some unique animal shots. Films never before taken in the jungle."

"There's only one thing needed to make the film a really superduper, colossal, mammoth humdinger," laughed Slim in a voice that seemed to float down from the tree-tops, "and that's something we'd never get—and live to tell the tale."

"What's that, Slim?" asked Jim.

"A herd of rhinos in full charge—*right at the camera*," Slim mused dreamily.

"It can be done, *and* with safety!" Joe exclaimed. "Take your jeep to Rhino plain, and I'll follow in the truck. The rhinos know your truck by sight, and if we set up the camera on it, they're more likely to do as they're told." He broke off, head cocked. "Just listen to those monks. They seem to know something's in the wind."

Twenty yards away, Hector Bragg's podgy face was set in a sweaty scowl. So the film was to be a winner, a fortune-maker, was it? A hundred per cent box office draw! He looked enviously towards the tin boxes that contained the precious film negatives. As Irving Gisberg said, it was all "in the can."

Rage and jealousy boiled up in Bragg as he thought what he had missed. But his cunning brain worked overtime. Rhinos were the most dangerous animals in the jungle. Not even Joe would be able to handle a *wild* stampede of them. A slow smile crept over Bragg's ugly face.

"I have a plan," he mused. "A plan that'll fix things so that the rhino charge takes care of both the Yanks and Jungle Joe and his precious assistant. With them safely out of the way, I can walk away with the films, make a fortune, and live in luxury."

Though Bragg hurried across swampy ground, scrub and plateau, he reached the Rhino Plain fully an hour after the others.

He peered through the foliage. Just in time! There were Slim and Irving with the camera mounted on the truck. A little further away was the jeep, loaded with the precious film containers.

But the sight that almost set him rocking with amazement was Jungle Joe and Rikky—with six huge rhinos standing in line near their water-hole, as though waiting instructions.

"Okay!" Joe's voice floated above the warning chatter of monkeys to the villainous watcher. "Set 'em rolling, Slim."

Joe and Rikky ran to one side, out of range of the camera. They sprinted to the truck, mounted it, and stood beside Slim. Jim grabbed a megaphone.

"*Avangar!*" he bellowed to the watching rhinos.

Bragg, in hiding, slowly raised the shot-gun that he carried.

"I guess that means 'charge' in rhino language," he muttered. "Well, Jungle Joe and Co. are going to get a charge all right—a death-dealing one!"

Back in the truck, Slim was looking through his view-finder, getting the scoop of his life as the rhinos sped like a squadron of army tanks towards the camera.

"D-d-don't forget to give 'em the shout to wheel left and right, boss," Rikky reminded Joe, with a short laugh—thrilled, but just a bit scared. "And—oh, golly, look who's come to see the fun—!" He pointed to a clump of trees a little way from the fast-charging rhinos. The three playful cheetahs were standing there, roaring and shaking their heads to attract Joe's attention. "What a fine time to want to romp!"

"They're trying to tell us something," Jim murmured. "But whatever it is will have to wait."

He eyed the foremost rhino, which was now only fifteen yards away from the camera truck. "Now to break up the charge."

Jungle Joe clamped the megaphone to his mouth. Wildly he waved his free hand to left and right.

"Oomgar," he bellowed. "Oomgar!"

Screened by foliage, Hector Bragg slowly took aim with his shot-gun, preparing to squeeze the trigger.

"So in rhino lingo 'Oomgar' means 'break up the charge,'" he muttered to himself. "But this is one time when those 'animal-tanks' aren't going to obey. Good-bye for keeps, Jungle Joe!"

CHEATED BY CHEETAHS

ALREADY the rhinos were veering to right and left to miss the truck, just as Jungle Joe was ordering them.

But at that moment Hector Bragg fired.

At the sound of a shot in the jungle reserve, Joe roared with anger. He saw the crouching figure of Hector Bragg, gun to shoulder, and his blood boiled.

He started forward, but had gone only half a pace before a fusillade of shot fanned out from Bragg's gun and rattled against the tough hide of the rhinos.

The pellets did not penetrate, but they stung like mad.

Easily roused to anger, the rhinos bellowed wildly. Tusk down, beady eyes glittering, the leader wheeled back to the truck, roaring ferociously.

Joe fumed. He'd have to deal with Bragg later. Just now the charging rhinos needed all his attention.

"*Oomgar!*" yelled Joe, ordering the rhinos to spread out and break up the charge.

The leader of the herd roared a counter-order. Their faith in Joe momentarily shattered, the other rhinos also turned their huge bodies and fearsome tusks towards the film truck.

Wham! Crash!

By the sheer weight and bulk of the onslaught, the truck went over on its side, with Jungle Joe and its other occupants hurled out. Dazed, shaken, bruised, they were half-buried by camera kit and tarpaulins.

The rhino-leader, still stinging from the shot-pellets, mustered his herd to charge and trample on them.

Meanwhile, Bragg sprinted from cover to the jeep containing the valuable film negatives. As Joe yelled and gesticulated to ward off another attack from the rhinos, Bragg jumped into the driving seat of the jeep. He drove off across the plain, accelerating until the vehicle was bouncing along at nearly fifty miles an hour.

Joe shook an angry fist. Because he'd had to deal with the rhinos he'd been unable to stop Bragg making a get-away.

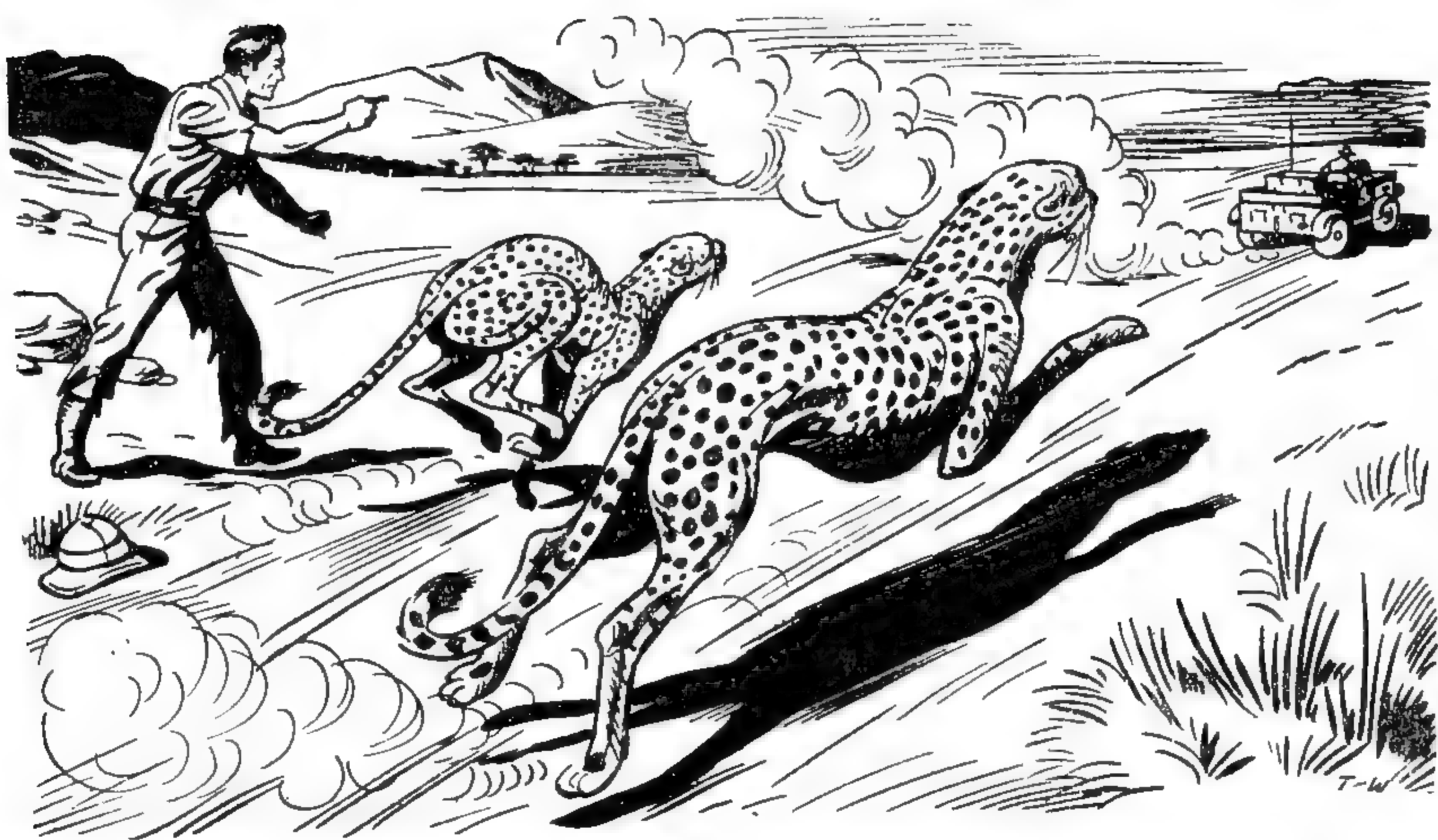
Bragg chuckled. Everything was plain sailing now. He would escape with the film negatives. He'd hide them somewhere. Then he'd get hold of a crook lawyer who would concoct some case that he had a claim on the film. After all, possession was nine-tenths of the law.

The film company would realise that it would be cheaper to buy the films back from him than face long legal battles. He chortled as he looked over his shoulder. Judging from the dust that was being raised back there, Jungle Joe and Co. were in plenty of trouble!

But he'd underestimated the power Jungle Joe had over animals.

Joe had kept his head, and continued shouting commands to the fast-approaching rhinos. At the very last second the animal furies had veered from the overturned truck, to soothe their stinging hides in the river's swift-flowing water.

"Bragg has bested us!" groaned film director Irving, holding a tender lump on his head. "By the



Joe pointed to the escaping film-stealer. "Ramado!" he yelled—and the sleek cheetahs leapt away in pursuit. Although the animals were the world's fastest, it was touch and go whether they could catch up with the swiftly-accelerating vehicle!

time we right our truck to give chase, that two-timing heel will be clear away."

"There's still a chance," Jungle Joe said grimly.

He signalled to the cheetahs who were sitting nearby, amazed at the strange happenings.

"These cats can run far faster than a race-horse. So I reckon they'll catch Hector Bragg for us."

"And they won't eat him," put in Rikky, "because he'd taste pretty foul. After all, cheetahs are rather particular."

"Ramado!" Joe yelled to the eager cheetahs, waving towards the speeding jeep. The big cats' ears quivered as they heard the words that, in jungle lingo, meant "hunt" or "chase."

The cheetahs were only too delighted to feel that it was now their turn to obey their master. They scorched across the plain after the jeep at his bidding. The fleet four-footers simply streaked along, and overtook the bouncing vehicle in a matter of minutes.

One cheetah tagged behind, at no more than a lope, while Bragg, terrified by this turn of events, drove flat out. The two other cheetahs raced ahead and clambered up a double line of rocks, between which the jeep had to pass.

Panic-stricken now, Bragg drove on. Both cheetahs sprang from their perches into the jeep. As the vehicle swerved, and came to rest against a rock, the third cheetah jumped aboard too.

Bragg's yells for help rang out frenziedly.

When Jungle Joe and Co. hurried up, they found him held down on his back by the cheetahs, but without a scratch on him. He couldn't move because every time he even squirmed, the giant cats showed their teeth and growled.

"A mouse-eye view of a cat!" chuckled Rikky. "Poor old Bragg."

"Save me!" begged the cowardly braggart. "Call 'em off. They'll eat me!"

"O.K., cheetahs!" Jungle Joe bade, with a smile. "Come here."

As the cheetahs leapt from Bragg, and came to their jungle master, Joe dragged the shaking man upright.

"We don't like men like you around here," he said sternly. "So we're handing you over to the police. There are quite a few charges that will keep you in the cooler for some time—illegal use of fire-arms in a wild game reserve; theft, false pretences, and——" Jim pointed to a lump on Irving's forehead, "grievous bodily harm!"

"Jungle Joe, how can I thank you. You've saved our film," breathed Irving Gisberg, pumping his hand. "You sure are a—a——"

"A wizard!" ended Rikky with a laugh.

And by the way that the cheetahs were purring and rubbing their furry heads against Jungle Joe, they seemed to think so, too!

THE END

NICK CASEY

WILD WEST SCOUT by GUY DEARIN

NICK CASEY, THE TOUGHEST SCOUT IN THE WILD WEST, HAD RECEIVED AN URGENT SUMMONS FROM THE COLONEL COMMANDING FORT GUNLAW. WITH HIS PARD, BUD DENBY, NICK HURRIED TO THE COLONEL'S OFFICE

NICK CASEY REPORTING, SIR

GOT YOUR MESSAGE, COLONEL. SOUNDS MIGHTY URGENT

IT IS URGENT, CASEY. A PRAIRIE SCHOONER WITH A CARGO OF RIFLES IS ON ITS WAY HERE. IT HAS TO CROSS INDIAN TERRITORY. THERE'S A DANGER THE REDSKINS WILL TRY TO RAID IT, BUT I'M SHORT OF SOLDIERS, SO I WANT YOU TO GUARD IT

AND AT DAWN--

IT'S A DANGEROUS MISSION. THEY'RE BRAVE MEN

GOOD LUCK, CASEY

WE'LL SEE THOSE RIFLES ARE DELIVERED SAFELY, SIR

VERY GOOD, SIR. BUD AND I WILL RIDE OUT AND MEET IT. WE'LL ESCORT IT THROUGH THE INJUN COUNTRY. WE'LL RIDE AT DAWN

FEARLESSLY THE PALS RACED ON ACROSS INDIAN COUNTRY

THAT WAGON IS A NASTY REMINDER OF THE SORT OF THING INJUNS DO, NICK

YOU'RE RIGHT, BUD. THEY DESTROYED IT A MONTH AGO. THEY'RE LIABLE TO SWEEP DOWN FROM THE HILLS AT ANY TIME

HARDLY HAD NICK SPOKEN THAN--

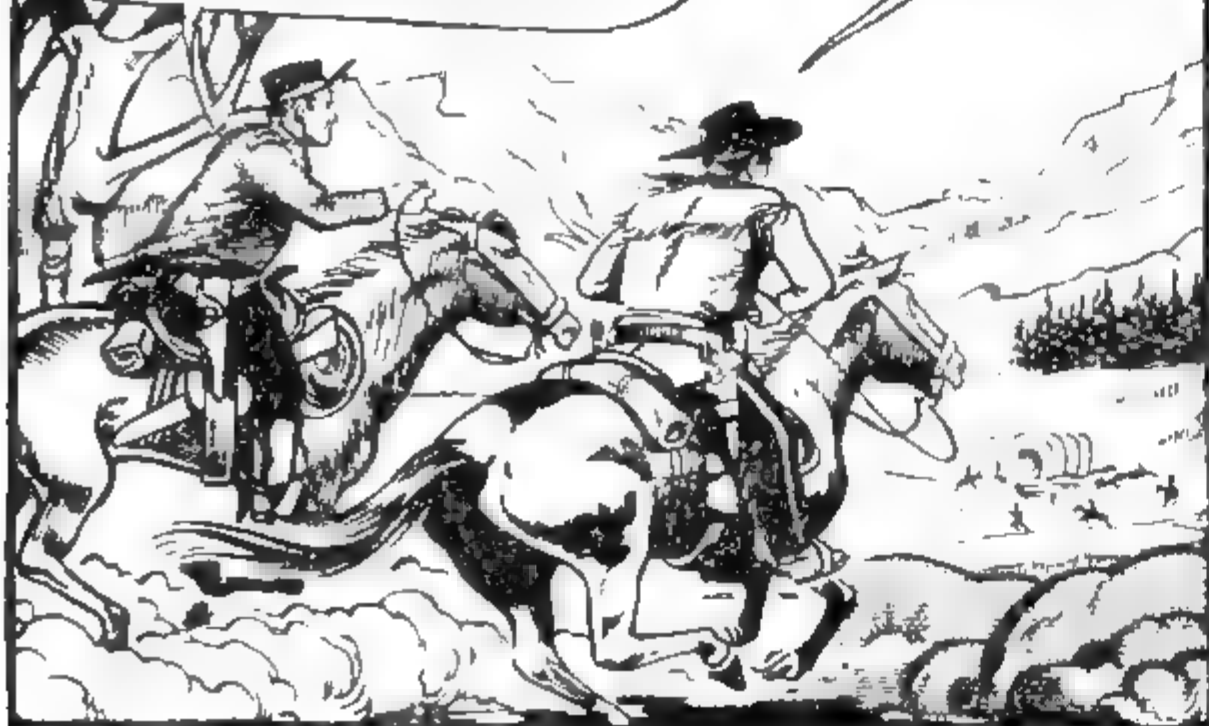
TARNATION! WHAT'S THAT?

BY THUNDER! IT'S A SIGNAL ROCKET FROM THE WAGON PARTY. COME ON, BUD. IT MEANS THEY'VE STRUCK TROUBLE

RIDING WITH RECKLESS DARING, NICK AND HIS PALS BURST UPON A GRIM SCENE

IT'S THE PRAIRIE SCHOONER — THE ONE BRINGING THE RIFLES TO FORT GUNLAW. THE INJUNS ARE ATTACKING!

AND, BY HECK, IT LOOKS DESPERATE FOR THE TROOPERS



WITH GUNS ROARING, THE PALS THUNDERED TO THE RESCUE OF THE OUTNUMBERED WAGON PARTY

IT WILL BE DEATH FOR MANY WHITES IF THE REDSKINS GET THE RIFLES. WE'VE GOTTA STOP 'EM

WA-A-A!
WE KILL PALEFACE SOLDIERS. WE TAKE RIFLES. DIE, PALEFACES!



NICK HURLED HIMSELF AT THE REDSKIN LEADER



NICK AND THE REDSKIN CRASHED TO THE GROUND



WITH THE TROOPERS NOW ALL WOUNDED, AND THE PALS BATTLING DESPERATELY AGAINST ODDS, SOME OF THE REDSKINS RAIDED THE WAGON

HUH!
BOXES MUCH HEAVY. MANY QUICK-FIRE GUNS. WE MUST TAKE AWAY BY TRAVOIS



WHILE STILL AT GRIPS WITH THE LEADER OF THE REDSKINS, NICK SUDDENLY GAVE AN AMAZED GASP

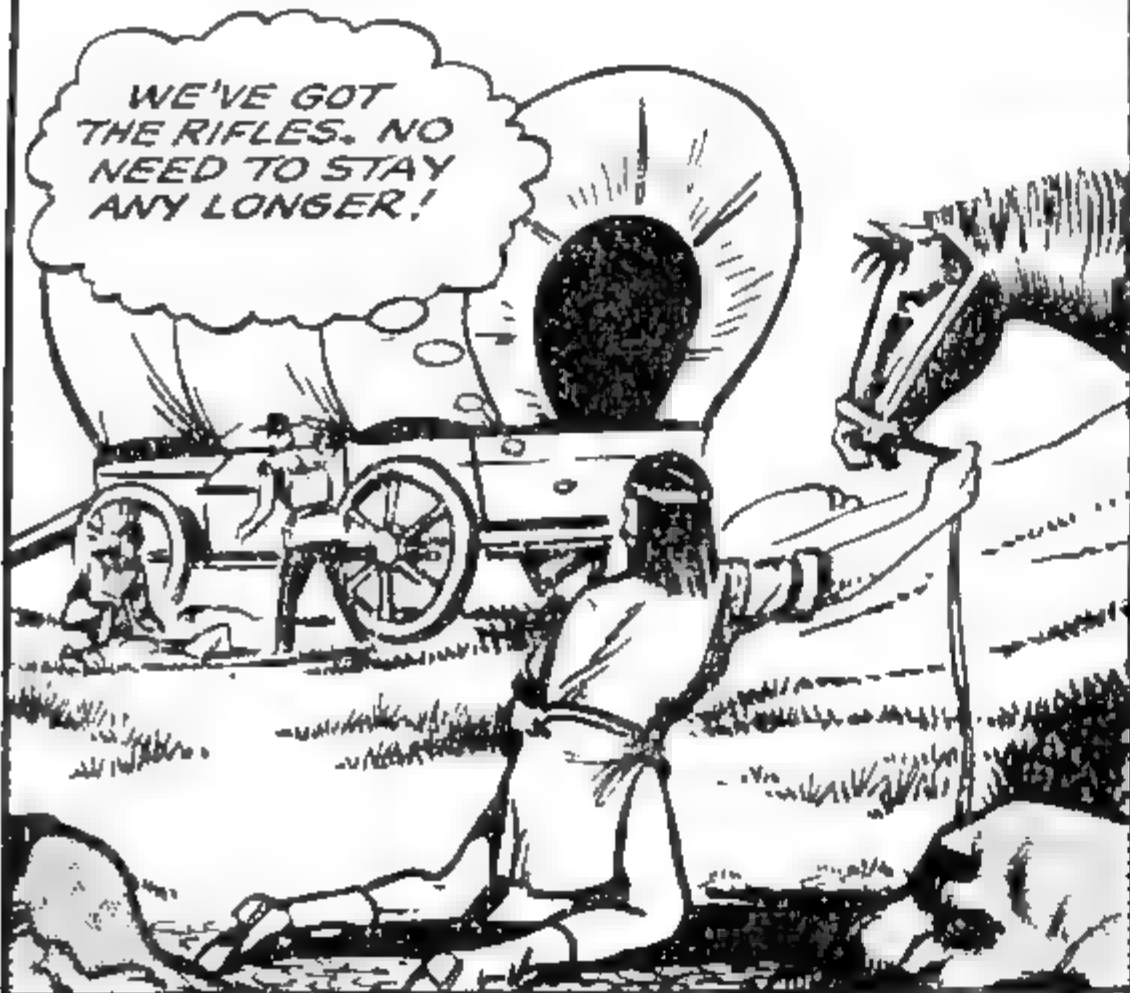
HECK! THIS S-SHAPED SCAR ON THE BACK OF HIS HAND. I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE



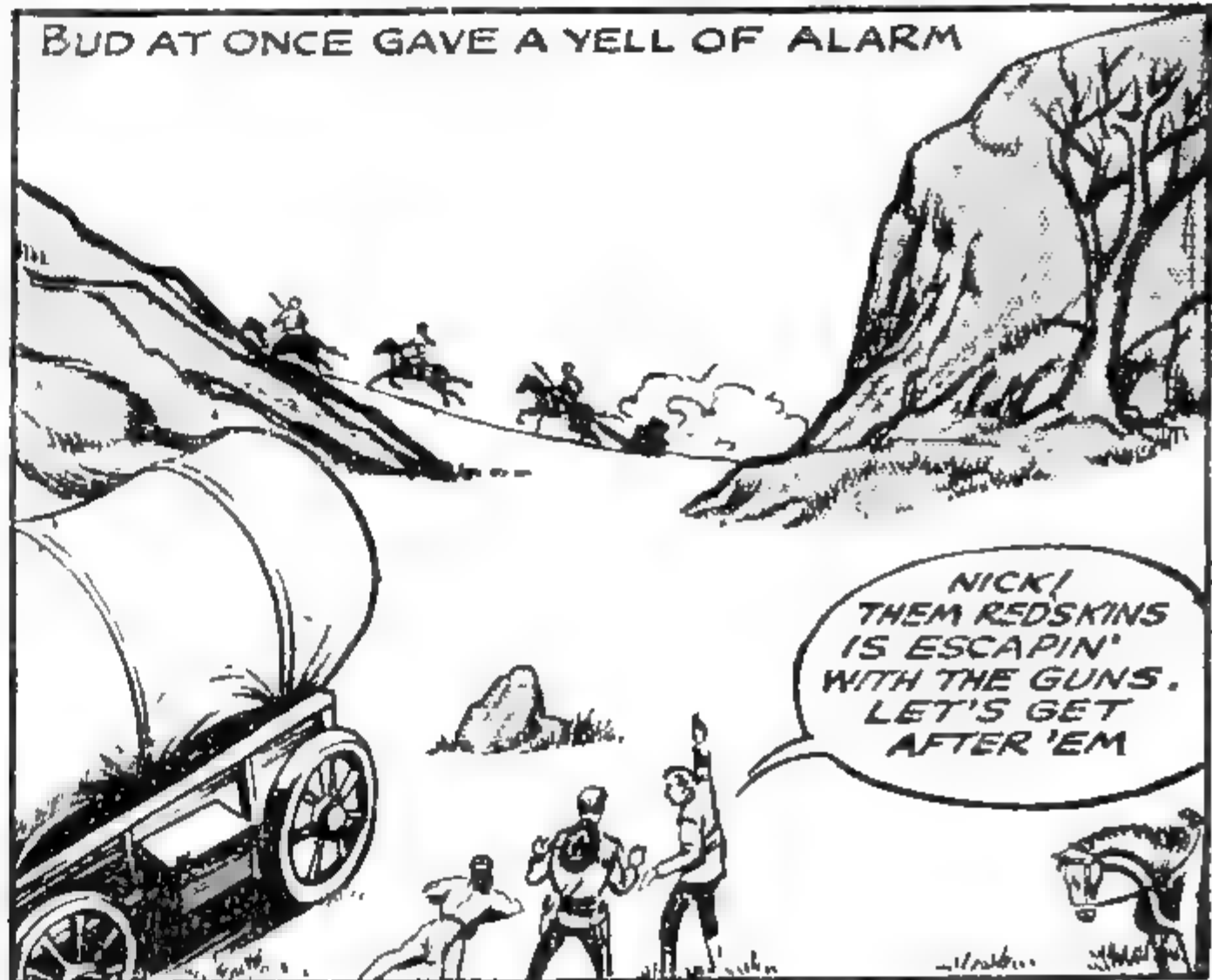
AT THAT MOMENT, NICK REALISED THAT BUD WAS IN TERRIBLE PERIL. INSTANTLY THE FAMOUS SCOUT LEAPT TO HIS HELP



THE LEADER OF THE INDIANS SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO DIVE AWAY



BUD AT ONCE GAVE A YELL OF ALARM



WE MUST SEE TO THE WOUNDED FIRST, BUD, AND I'VE NEWS FOR YOU. THAT INJUN CHIEF IS NO REDSKIN. HE'S BULL BARTON, A WHITE CROOK. I RECOGNISED THE SCAR ON HIS HAND!



BULL BARTON? GOSH! HE'S A REAL BAD HOMBRE. HIM AN' HIS GANG ARE WANTED FOR MURDER. I GUESS HE DISGUISED HIMSELF AS A REDSKIN TO AVOID BEING RECOGNISED



THE WOUNDED TROOPERS WERE SENT ON THEIR WAY TO FORT GUNLAW. NICK AND BUD THEN SET OFF AFTER BARTON



ACROSS MILES OF WILD COUNTRY NICK TRACKED THE TRAVOIS AND THE STOLEN RIFLES. THEN ABRUPTLY HE HALTED

HIST, BUD. I FIGURE THEM RED CRITTURS IS JES' OVER THAT RISE



THE SIGHT THAT MET NICK'S GAZE FILLED HIM WITH RAGE

D'YOU SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED? THEM REDSKINS WHO HELPED BULL BARTON TO RAID THE WAGON ARE DOWN THERE WITH A BOTTLE OF FIRE-WATER. THAT'S WHAT HE BRIBED THEM WITH. NOW HE'S VANISHED WITH THE LOOT



I'VE GOTTA GET THAT FIRE-WATER AWAY FROM THE INJUNS BEFORE IT SENDS 'EM CRAZY. I'LL CHARGE STRAIGHT ON. YOU SCATTER THEIR HORSES SO THEY CAN'T CHASE US. WE'LL JOIN UP AGAIN IN THE FOREST

NICK TORE DOWN THE HILL AT BREAKNECK SPEED



WA-A! PALEFACE CASEY COMING, RIDING LIKE WIND



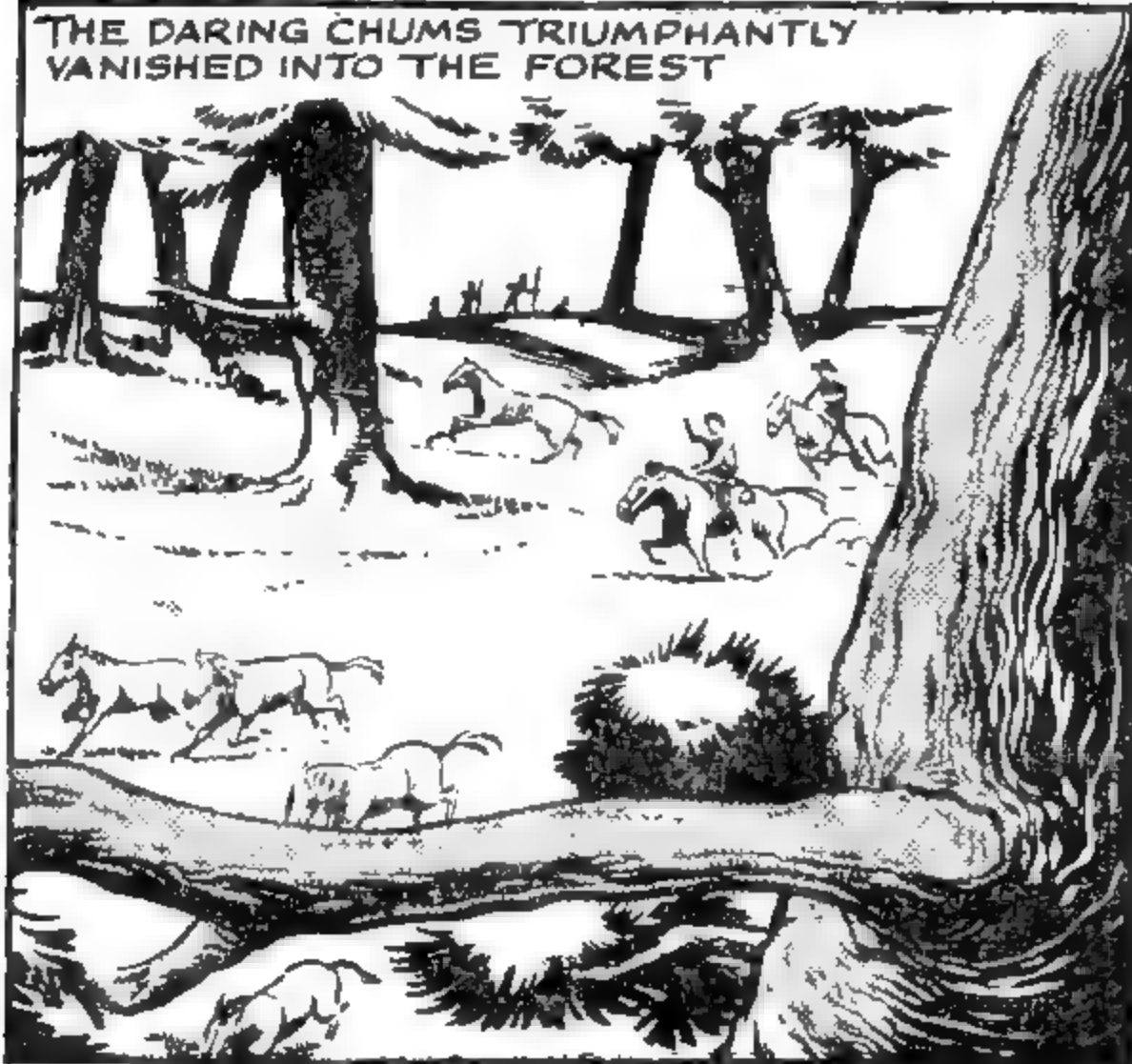
NICK BURST AMONG THE INDIANS AND GRABBED THE BOTTLE OF WHISKY

YOUR LUCK'S OUT, REDSKIN. THERE ISN'T GONNA BE ANY FIRE-WATER FOR YOU CRITTURS

YIPPEE! GET MOVIN', YOU PONIES. YARROO!



THE DARING CHUMS TRIUMPHANTLY
VANISHED INTO THE FOREST



WHEN THEY REINED UP AND LOOKED AT THE
WHISKY BOTTLE, BUD FROWNE

THAT'S
A QUEER
FIGURE
SEVEN ON
THE LABEL,
ISN'T IT?

IT'S A FRENCH SEVEN, BUD.
AND THERE'S ONLY ONE
FRENCH SALOON KEEPER IN
THESE PARTS -- FRENCHY
LATOUR, OF PINETREE CITY.
THAT'S WHERE BULL
BARTON BOUGHT IT,
SO I GUESS WE'LL
GO AND SEARCH
FOR HIM
THERE



AT THAT MOMENT, SAVAGE WHOOPS
RANG OUT FROM THE FOREST.
ALREADY THE INDIANS HAD
ROUNDED UP THEIR
PONIES

THERE ARE THE
PALEFACES WHO TOOK
OUR FIRE-WATER.
SLAY! SLAY!



SPURRING THEIR HORSES INTO A GALLOP,
THE PALS WENT RACING OFF-- NICK
MAKING SURE THAT THE WHISKY
WOULD NEVER BE DRUNK

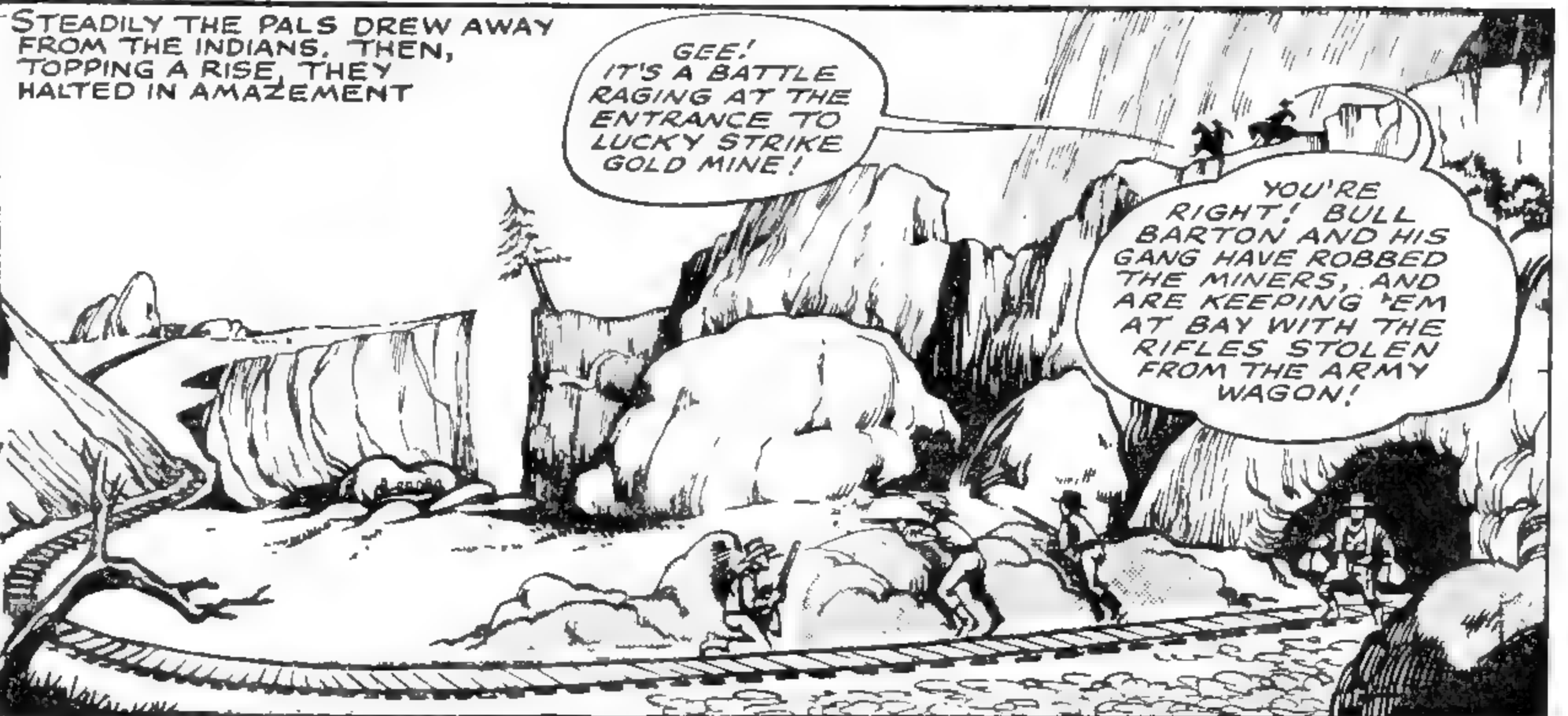
THAT'S
THE END OF
THEIR FIRE-
WATER. NOW TO
SHAKE 'EM OFF
AND SEEK FOR
BULL BARTON
IN PINETREE
CITY



STEADILY THE PALS DREW AWAY
FROM THE INDIANS. THEN,
TOPPING A RISE, THEY
HALTED IN AMAZE

GEE!
IT'S A BATTLE
RAGING AT THE
ENTRANCE TO
LUCKY STRIKE
GOLD MINE!

YOU'RE
RIGHT! BULL
BARTON AND HIS
GANG HAVE ROBBED
THE MINERS, AND
ARE KEEPING 'EM
AT BAY WITH THE
RIFLES STOLEN
FROM THE ARMY
WAGON!



IT'S UP TO US TO SAVE THE GOLD—AND GET THE RIFLES BACK, NICK. BUT HOW THE HECK CAN WE DO IT?

WE'VE JUST GOTTA DO IT. COME ON!



TO THE REAR OF THE PALS GALLOPED THE VENGEANCE-SEEKING INDIANS

WAA-AA!
PALEFACES RIDE INTO TRAP. NOW WE HAVE THEM. DEATH TO THE PALEFACES!



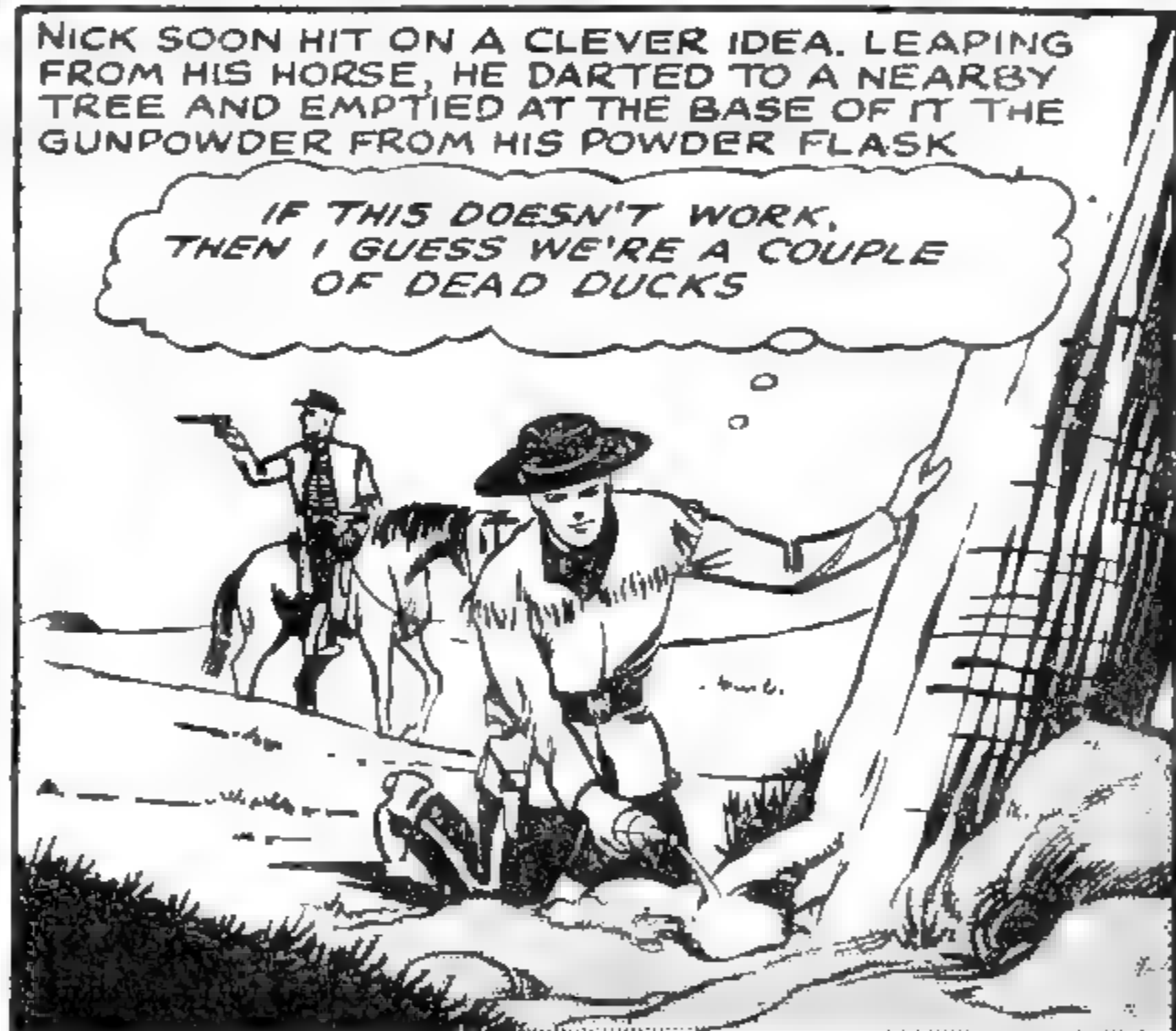
NICK AND BUD HADN'T GONE FAR WHEN A CHASM BARRED THEIR WAY

GEE! HOW C'N WE CROSS?
THE REDSKINS ARE COMING UP FAST BEHIND US!



NICK SOON HIT ON A CLEVER IDEA. LEAPING FROM HIS HORSE, HE DARTED TO A NEARBY TREE AND EMPTIED AT THE BASE OF IT THE GUNPOWDER FROM HIS POWDER FLASK

IF THIS DOESN'T WORK,
THEN I GUESS WE'RE A COUPLE OF DEAD DUCKS



WHILE BUD OPENED UP ON THE PURSUING INDIANS, NICK GRIMLY FIRED AT THE HEAP OF GUNPOWDER AND --



IT'S WORKED!
THE TRUNK IS FALLING
ACROSS THE CHASM AND
FORMING A BRIDGE.
WHOOPEE!

BUD WENT ACROSS FIRST, WITH NICK ACTING AS REAR-GUARD



NICK THEN FOLLOWED, WATCHED BY THE ASTONISHED INDIANS

WAA-A-EE!
PALEFACE MAD.
HE WILL FALL TO
HIS DEATH



STEADY, BOY.
I'VE GOTTA MAKE SURE
THEM INJUNS STAY ON
THEIR OWN SIDE



NICK'S HORSE TOWED THE TREE-TRUNK CLEAR JUST
IN TIME

THAT'S THE
SPIRIT, MY BEAUTY.
THEY WON'T BE ABLE
TO FOLLOW US ANY
FARTHER NOW



BUT WHAT ABOUT
THEM MINERS, NICK?
BULL BARTON'S GANG
WILL BE MAKING OFF
WITH THE GOLD IN A
COUPLE OF JIFFS.
WE'RE TOO FAR
AWAY TO STOP
'EM

WE'RE NOT,
PARD--NOT
IF WE ACT
PRONTO



DOWN BELOW, THE MINERS WERE FILLED WITH
DESPAIR

WE AIN'T GOTTA CHANCE AGIN
THEM RIFLES. BULL BARTON AN'
HIS GANG WILL GIT
CLEAN AWAY
WITH OUR
GOLD



BUT NICK AND BUD WERE ON THEIR WAY!

THIS LINE GOES
DOWN TO THE MINE.
THROW YOURSELF FLAT
IN THE TRUCK. WE'RE
GOING TO BEAT BARTON
YET



IT'S MOVING
HANG ON!

I ALWAYS
DID WANNA
RIDE ON ONE O'
THESE TRUCKS.
WE'RE AWAY!

SUDDENLY ONE OF THE MINERS LET OUT
A YELL OF DELIGHT

JUMPIN'
FROGS! JES' LOOK
AT THEM TWO
BOYOS RACIN'
DOWN ON THAT
TRUCK. THEY'RE
COMIN' TO OUR
RESCUE!

SPEEDING ROUND THE LAST BEND, NICK AND
BUD CAUGHT THE GANG BY SURPRISE

TAKE THAT, YOU
DIRTY RENEGADE.
GUESS THAT FIXES YOU,
BULL BARTON

GIT
YOUR HANDS UP,
YOU THIEVIN'
SKUNKS

TWO MINUTES LATER --

OKAY,
CASEY.
WE GIVE
IN

YOU BET
YOU DO, BARTON.
I'M TAKING
YOU AND YOUR
GANG BACK
TO FORT
GUNLAW.
AND I GUESS
YOU'LL PAY
PLENTY FOR
WHAT YOU'VE
DONE

AS NICK WHISTLED TO THE PALS' HORSES
TO COME DOWN THE SLOPE, BUD FORCED
THE BEATEN GANG TO STACK THE
STOLEN RIFLES

C'MON,
YOU UGLY
CRITTURS
WE'RE IN A
HURRY TO
GET 'EM TO
FORT
GUNLAW

LATER, TO THE CHEERS OF THE GOLD MINERS,
NICK AND BUD SET OFF FOR THE FORT

A
THOUSAND
THANKS, PARDS.
HOPE YOU
GET THERE
SAFE

NO
REDSKINS WILL
DARE TO ATTACK
AN ESCORT
LIKE THIS

NOT
LIKELY! WITH
NICKIN' CHARGE,
YOU C'N BET
YOUR BOOTS THEM
GUNS WILL BE
DELIVERED
INTACT!

THE END.

The SCHOOLBOY INVENTOR

BY
TOM
STIRLING



BAD NEWS FOR THE REMOVE

HARRY Drew braked his bike outside the corner house where his pal Ray Cutler lived. If Ray and he were to be on time at school, they had not a moment to waste.

Harry suspected that at this moment Ray was at work in the garden shed on one of his inventions, and might have forgotten all about school.

He misjudged Ray. Suddenly, an alarm bell rang. It was as powerful as a fire-station alarm, and two passers-by halted, while three or four front doors along the street were opened to let the occupants out to see what was going on.

Out from his house came Ray, and as he did so, the bell stopped.

"Works well, that alarm bell. I timed it so that it gives us exactly six minutes to get to school," he said. "I made it loud so that I'd be sure of hearing it."

"Pity you didn't think of a bomb that would blow you out of the shed on to your bike," grinned Harry, always amused by his brainy, scientific pal.

"Bit difficult to control," said Ray gravely. "You see a bomb that had sufficient force to convey my mass would also disintegrate the shed."

He seemed to be groping for paper and pencil so that he could draw a diagram to prove it.

"Skip it!" grinned Harry. "Let's get going."

Ray mounted his bike, which was as full of gadgets as a racing car. It had a speedometer, a wind-speed recorder, a rear-view mirror, and a patent twin-horn that projected a sound equal to that of a high-powered sports car road-blaster. He was also toying with the idea of inventing a hood for rainy weather, but that was still experimental.

"By the way," said Ray, pulling something from his pocket. "Does that look like a human hand?"

Harry gave a slight start as he took the object. It was like a thin rubber glove but the palm had the lines and lumps of a human hand.

"Pretty good," he admitted. "But what's the idea? Why not invent something more useful, such as a machine for writing lines? This looks like a hand all right, but who cares?"

Ray smiled. He was a serious-minded chap, but he did smile sometimes. He had a lean, learned face, a high bumpy forehead, and large, adjustable glasses like headlamps.

"If a master could mistake it for a hand that's all that matters," he said.

Ray's Gadgets are a Scream—Especially When They Tame a Bully!

"Going to make a mystery hand appear from nowhere?" asked his chum.

"Only out of my sleeve," replied Ray.

"But what's the idea?" grunted Harry. "I don't get it."

"My real hand will be inside that glove," explained Ray. "The glove is a shock absorber capable of deadening any violently applied stimulus, cushioning the blow, and protecting the nerves——"

"Oh, chuck it," begged Harry. "In words of one syllable, what? You mean—gosh!" he gasped, as light dawned. "You mean it's to protect hands from caning? Gosh? And it'll really do it? I say! Wizard! Thanks, pal." Swiftly he pocketed it.

"Hey—that's for me," objected Ray.

"Shush! There's a prefect ahead. No arguing," warned Harry with a grin.

He reckoned he might easily have a caning coming that afternoon. In that case, he could give the glove a try-out. Ray didn't get whacked so often.

There was, as Harry said, a prefect ahead. He was riding in the middle of the road, and as overtaking another cyclist beyond the middle line of the road was barred by school order, Harry and Ray would have to stay behind the prefect.

The prefect, Hoskins, was taking it in leisurely style, because he was Gate Prefect posted to check the boys who were late. His duties didn't begin until the gates were closed. He could afford to be late. Harry and Ray couldn't.

"Give him a blast, Ray," urged Harry.

Ray pressed the button of his road blaster. There were, as he had explained, two horns which separately were inaudible, the sound being beyond human hearing range. But when the sound beams joined up ahead, they produced a high, fierce, urgent blasting note over a small area.

As Ray switched on the horns, they appeared to make no noise in the immediate vicinity, but ahead, in the region of Hoskin's ear, came a shrill, fierce and alarming sound. It was as if a car doing sixty m.p.h. was just behind the prefect.

Hoskins pulled over to the left, and looked around, glowering, for the car.

But there was no car in sight—only Harry and Ray who pedalled easily past the prefect.

Hoskins looked back, frowned, and then looked at them.

"Hi!" he shouted. Harry and Ray went faster, and Hoskins also went still faster until he drew level with them and howled: "Stop!"

They had to stop. Hoskins was breathing hard, and his face was deep crimson. He was a big fellow, and if he had been as clever as he was hefty, he could have got into the Sixth without fiddling.

"Just a minute. Where's that car horn you've got on your bike?" he asked Ray, looking the bike over suspiciously.

"Car horn?" asked Ray innocently. "There is no car horn, only two supersonic diffusers."

Hoskins saw two diaphragms and a press button.

"Smart, eh? And suppose I press that button?"

"Whoa! Don't do that," said Ray in alarm. "That's gone wrong."

"Is that so? Well, I disagree," sneered Hoskins, with a cunning leer.

He stretched out his hand, and Ray tried to fend him off. For that button did not operate his sound device but his oiling system. And, as he had warned Hoskins, it had gone wrong.

"If you don't let me press that button, I'll report you to the Head," warned Hoskins.

"You insist?" said Ray.

"I do," Hoskins retorted, and pressed the button.

No sound came—except from him, and he made plenty. For, as he pressed the button, a thin jet of oil squirted out of a nozzle into his face.

"Yowow!" he yelped, and tottered back.

Thin oil streamed down his face, and in fury he mopped it off.

"Take a hundred lines," he snapped. "Or you can take three with the cane."

"But—but Ray told you it had gone wrong," protested Harry indignantly. "You insisted on fiddling around with it!"

"I don't care. Cutler knew what would happen. It was deliberate," snarled Hoskins. "A hundred lines, I said. And let me tell you something else, you two, I'm in charge of your first class lesson this morning, and first lesson this afternoon, too, as Mr. Pritchard is away. So—watch out!"

Harry and Ray rode on.

"Tough," frowned Harry. "The ass insisted on pressing the button."

"Oh, I'm not worried," said Ray, lightly, "I've been wanting to try out that glove. This gives me a chance."

"Well, I don't believe in letting these prefects get away with injustice," said Harry. "Hoskins is a wrong 'un. He ought not to be a prefect."

But Hoskins *was* a prefect, and he liked power. He had had to put up with a lot of cheek before he had been made prefect, and now he was working off a few old scores.

When he had heard that he was to be in charge of the Remove for first lesson that morning, he had rubbed his hands with glee; and he reckoned that quite a few Removites would soon be rubbing their hands too, but not with glee!

A NEW INVENTION NEEDED

IT was Harry who took the bad news to the Remove, and it brought groans. There were even a few audible groans when Hoskins arrived in the Form-room to take charge, but they died down when the Head followed him in.

Mr. Humbledon, the Head, had a strong sense of discipline, and he was a man to be reckoned with. He did not believe in sparing the rod and spoiling the boy.

"Now boys," he rumbled, twirling his handlebar moustache and knitting his bushy eyebrows. "Remember, Hoskins is to be obeyed with all the ready enthusiasm and response you would give to a master."

There was dead silence in the Form-room.

"And Hoskins," went on the Head turning to the prefect. "You have my permission to cane any boy who is unruly and disobedient, but of course within reason. Not so hard, for instance, as to break a cane," he added with a touch of grim humour.

"I'll be moderate, sir," nodded Hoskins meekly. "I shall use the cane as a last resort only."

Murmuring broke out as the door closed, and Hoskins snatched up the cane.

"Any boy who wants to be caned can step out in front," he said ominously.

There was a gasp as Ray stepped out to the front.

"You—you want to be caned?" gasped Hoskins, taken aback.

"You said I was to write a hundred lines or else be caned," said Ray. "I prefer the caning if it is to be moderate and reasonable."

A murmur of surprise came from the form. For Hoskins really laid it on well and truly.

"You know what I am caning you for?" asked Hoskins.

"Because, against my advice, you pressed the wrong button on my bike and squirted oil in your face," said Ray, who always stated the plain facts in a scientific manner.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell, and Hoskins went red in the face.

"I'm caning you for playing silly practical jokes on a prefect," he snapped. "Hold out your hand."

Ray held out his left gloved hand. Only a close inspection would have shown that it was not the real thing. But Hoskins did not inspect it closely.

Hoskins gripped the cane fondly, tested his grip, had a practice swipe, got his weight on his left foot, ready to switch it at the right moment to his right, and brought the cane down.

Wheeee, it whistled. Whang!

The sound was realistic enough, and Ray's hand gave slightly. But he felt no pain. However, he shook it realistically, and tucked it under his right armpit.

"And again," said Hoskins, slightly disappointed. Wheee . . . Whang!

That done, Ray put his hand out again like Oliver Twist asking for more. And Hoskins, who had only meant to give two, delivered a third, breathing hard.

Out went Ray's hand again.

"Three's the limit," snapped Hoskins, amazed.

"Yes, don't be greedy," muttered Harry. "You'll tire him out so he won't be able to cane us."

Watched in amazement by the others, Ray returned to his desk. He winked in passing at Harry, while Hoskins, disappointed, glared at the others. It was pretty obvious that Ray not been hurt, and he felt that he had failed.

"There's plenty more where that came from," warned Hoskins a little sullenly. "Now get out your books."

Ray flicked his desk lid, and it shot up, forced by a spring. Instantly, a light came on inside. This was more of his inventive work!

The light was a novelty, and chaps craned to see inside, but before they could see anything, down came the lid.

Hoskins noticed the craning, curious heads.

"Cutler! What have you got in that desk?" he demanded.

"My books, Hoskins," answered Ray.

"That wasn't why the other chaps were staring. It's a mouse or something, or one of your scientific gadgets," snapped Hoskins, striding up the aisle. "Let me see!"

He grabbed the desk lid, and pulled. Nothing happened. The lid did not open.

"You can't open it by pulling. It's got a patent lock," said Ray mildly. "Use this lever!" He pointed to it.

Hoskins grabbed the lever and pulled it, and the lid shot up.

Of course, if Hoskins had been more observant he would have noticed before how that lid had shot open with spring force. But he wasn't the keen-eyed type. He was completely unprepared for what happened.

As soon as he pressed the lever, the lid shot up! Unfortunately he was leaning over it at the time.

Biff! The rising lid hit him a heavyweight punch on the nose, with the sound of a slammed door.

"Gug-gug—" he spluttered, and tottered back.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl of mirth.

Hoskins, his nose pink, felt it tenderly. He blinked, tears filling his eyes. Then he lashed out at Ray and caught him a clump on the ear.

"Shame!"

"Bully—"

Ray ducked, and Hoskins, gritting his teeth, drew back. He had gone too far. Striking boys with fists wasn't permitted.

"I take that back," he said thickly to Ray.

The idea of anyone "taking back" a clump on the ear tickled the Removites. Harry Drew hooted with mirth. Hoskins was furious.

"A hundred lines for every boy who laughed," he snapped. "A hundred lines, Drew. You too, Jones. You, Morgan, and you, Giles."

He named a dozen chaps and would have named

more if the severe punishment hadn't taken the grins from the faces of the others.

"Understand? If those lines aren't brought to me first lesson this afternoon—you'll be given six each. Six! Get it?" snarled Hoskins.

Striding up and down with the cane under his arm, Hoskins made the Removites take out their algebra books, and tackle problems.

When the lesson ended, he faced them grimly.

"A hundred lines by first lesson this afternoon, or else——"

Harry jumped up.

"We can't do a hundred lines in the dinner hour," he said.

"That's your bad luck then. But I'm not a severe chap," jeered Hoskins. "I'll be content with fifty by first lesson, and the rest by to-morrow morning."

He left the Remove in a seething rage. Fifty lines in the dinner-hour! It was a bit thick. And all because they had laughed.

"A chap hits himself in the face," frowned Harry in wrath. "And then he doesn't expect us to laugh. He must have known the lid would fly up. Why did he put his nose in the way?"

"He has to put his nose in everything," shrugged Giles.

"I've a jolly good mind not to do the lines," said Morgan. "And let him report me to the Head."

"Better not," advised Harry. "The Head always backs up the prefects first, and argues afterwards. Hoskins getting a ticking off won't console me for six of the worst."

"Hear, hear."

Ray stepped forward.

"Perhaps I could say it was my fault, and take the whacking," he said.

They knew nothing about his glove, and he had sworn Harry to silence about it in case the story leaked out and reached a prefect, or even the Head.

"Certainly not," said Morgan.

"Of course Ray's tough," grinned Harry. "These scientific chaps are all brains and no feelings."

"Our only hope," grunted Giles, "is that Hoskins overdoes it and breaks the cane. In that case—who would like to be first?"

But no one was keen to give Hoskins a chance to break the cane, even if it did mean he would be forbidden to cane chaps again.

On the way home at dinner time Harry thought it over as he rode with Ray

"There wouldn't be much time to switch the glove from chap to chap. It might be seen," he grunted. "Of course, you really ought to invent a line writing machine, Ray."

"Couldn't do it in the time," said Ray definitely. "And it would have to be able to imitate twenty or so different handwritings. Hoskins will examine those lines."

"H'm—well, I suppose—I suppose—Gosh!" ended Harry, as an idea struck him. "Couldn't you invent a cane that would fly to bits?"

"A cane that would fly to bits?" said Ray, startled. "Well it wouldn't be easy. Presumably it would be cut into sections which could be held together magnetically. H'm. Not easy to make it look like a cane. It would be too heavy."

"Our only chance is if Hoskins whacks us and breaks the cane," insisted Harry, giving Ray an encouraging pat on the shoulder. "Don't tell me the old brain can't rise to it?"

Ray wasn't the kind of chap who liked to admit failure, but this problem was not easy. When he dismounted at his gate, he was still thoughtful and silent.

But, suddenly, as he went through his gate, he gave an excited yell.

"I've got it!"

"You mean it? I needn't do the lines?" said Harry.



Grinning, Ray held his hand out to receive the bullying prefect's swishing gadget. The schoolboy inventor was testing an amazing gadget for turning caning into a "painless operation".

"No, there's no need. I've seen the way to fix things," said Ray beaming.

"Good old Ray! To the rescue again," chortled Harry.

"I'll ring the chaps and get the word passed round," he said next.

"I hope it works," called Ray anxiously, but Harry had ridden off.

And no one hoped it more sincerely than Harry!

MORE THAN HOSKINS COULD CHEW!

HOSKINS flicked the cane gently against his own trouser leg, and grinned ominously at the Removites when first lesson started that afternoon.

"Now about those lines," he snapped. "Stand up the twelve chaps I gave them to."

Twelve fellows stood up.

"Well, where are the lines?" demanded Hoskins.

"You, Drew?"

"Lines?" said Harry. "Well, actually I didn't do them, Hoskins."

"What? Why not?"

"Well, thinking it over," said Harry mildly, "and discussing it with the chaps, we decided it wasn't actually just, you know."

Hoskin's eyes goggled. He couldn't believe his ears.

"You—you decided it wasn't just. So—so you didn't do them?" he gasped.

"That's right," nodded Harry coolly. "If it had been reported to the Head, it might have got you into trouble, Hoskins."

Hoskin's eyes glinted.

"Is that so? Well perhaps the Head wouldn't be so shocked as you imagine at my punishing you for laughing at authority. Come out here—all of you."

The twelve Removites marched out to the front, and formed a queue with Harry at the head.

"Now," said Hoskins. "You're going to remember this."

"Not hard enough to break the cane," warned Harry.

"I'm not a fool," sneered Hoskins.

Suddenly Ray leaped up, waving his hand.

"Hoskins! You can't whack them with that cane," he cried. "Look—it's got a drawing pin in the end."

Hoskins looked at the cane and frowned. It certainly had a drawing pin in it, and the cane was already splitting.

"Huh! So someone put that in—someone smart enough to think it would finish the caning. Well, I expect there's another cane in the cupboard," he remarked.

Hoskins tossed the first cane aside, and went to the cupboard. While his back was turned, Harry

caught Ray's eye. Ray winked. This was *it*. Inside the cupboard was the cane he had fixed.

Hoskins took it out, and beamed.

"A brand new, highly polished cane," he smirked, looking at it. It appeared to be a normal cane, but better finished. "Well come on, Drew. You're not afraid?" he mocked.

"You won't really hurt?" asked Harry, with pretended alarm.

"You'll soon find out," said Hoskins.

Harry thrust out his hand and Hoskins brought down the cane. An ordinary cane would have been bent, but would not have broken. But this was no ordinary cane.

It came down with a mighty thwack—and Harry leaped up with an exaggerated howl as the cane flew into a dozen pieces.

"Shame!"

"Gosh!"

"He's broken the cane."

"Call the Head!"

As the Removites shouted their protests, Harry let out yelps of agony, and doubled up.

"Ooowoow—wowowowow—" he yelped.

Hoskins gave a violent start, and turned pale. He looked at the bits of cane. He knew he was strong, and he had certainly intended that to be a real stinger, but obviously he had overdone it this time.

"Quiet—quiet," he muttered in alarm as the Removites stamped their feet. "Do you want to bring the Head?"

"Yes!"

Hoskins dithered and shook.

"Drew—stop howling!" he ordered. "Show me your hand."

Harry showed his hand—with a smear of red chalk on it—and Hoskins winced.

"Gosh, Hoskins will be expelled for this," said Ray in awe. "Better pick up the bits of cane, chaps."

Ray picked up the bits, and Harry concealed his agony enough to help.

Morgan went to the door and peeped out.

"Cave—the Head," he muttered.

Hoskins dithered and rushed to pick up bits of the cane, and Harry gave him a bit for himself.

"Listen chaps," muttered Hoskins. "It was an accident—honestly. I'll never whack another chap again—I promise—"

Hoskins, like most bullies, was a coward at heart, and now he was quaking with fear. Only once before had a cane been broken in the school, and the master responsible had been made to resign. If the Head had heard Harry's howl of anguish, that alone was enough to bring him to the scene.

Harry looked around.

"Get rid of the evidence for Hoskins, chaps," he urged. "Any chap with a bit of cane—eat it!"

It was odd advice—very. Hoskins, dazed, saw Harry pop a piece of the cane into his mouth and scrunch it. Then Ray and the others did the same.

When the door swung open, and the Head entered, there was a hush. Hoskins finding the piece of cane before him—evidence of his guilt—popped it into his mouth. He was in such a dither he wasn't able to think clearly.

The Head strode to the front of the class, frowning.

"H'm! I am glad this Form is quiet. I heard some wild yelling and shouting. Did it come from here Hoskins?"

"No sir—I mean—yes sir—ymmymy sir—" muttered Hoskins.

"Hoskins, what are you chewing while I am talking to you?" demanded the Head, sternly.

"Nothing sir," said Hoskins pushing the two-inch bit of cane into his cheek.

"Nonsense! You have something in your mouth. Is this the kind of example to set the boys?" thundered the Head. "Remove it at once."

Hoskins, crimson in the face, removed the piece of cane, and the Head's eyes bulged as he looked at it. He strode to the desk and picked it up.

"This is a piece of cane," he said amazed, his eyes round in wonder.

"Is—is it, sus—sir?" said Hoskins. "The chaps were eating bits, sir—so—so—"

"Eating bits of cane?" babbled the astounded Head.

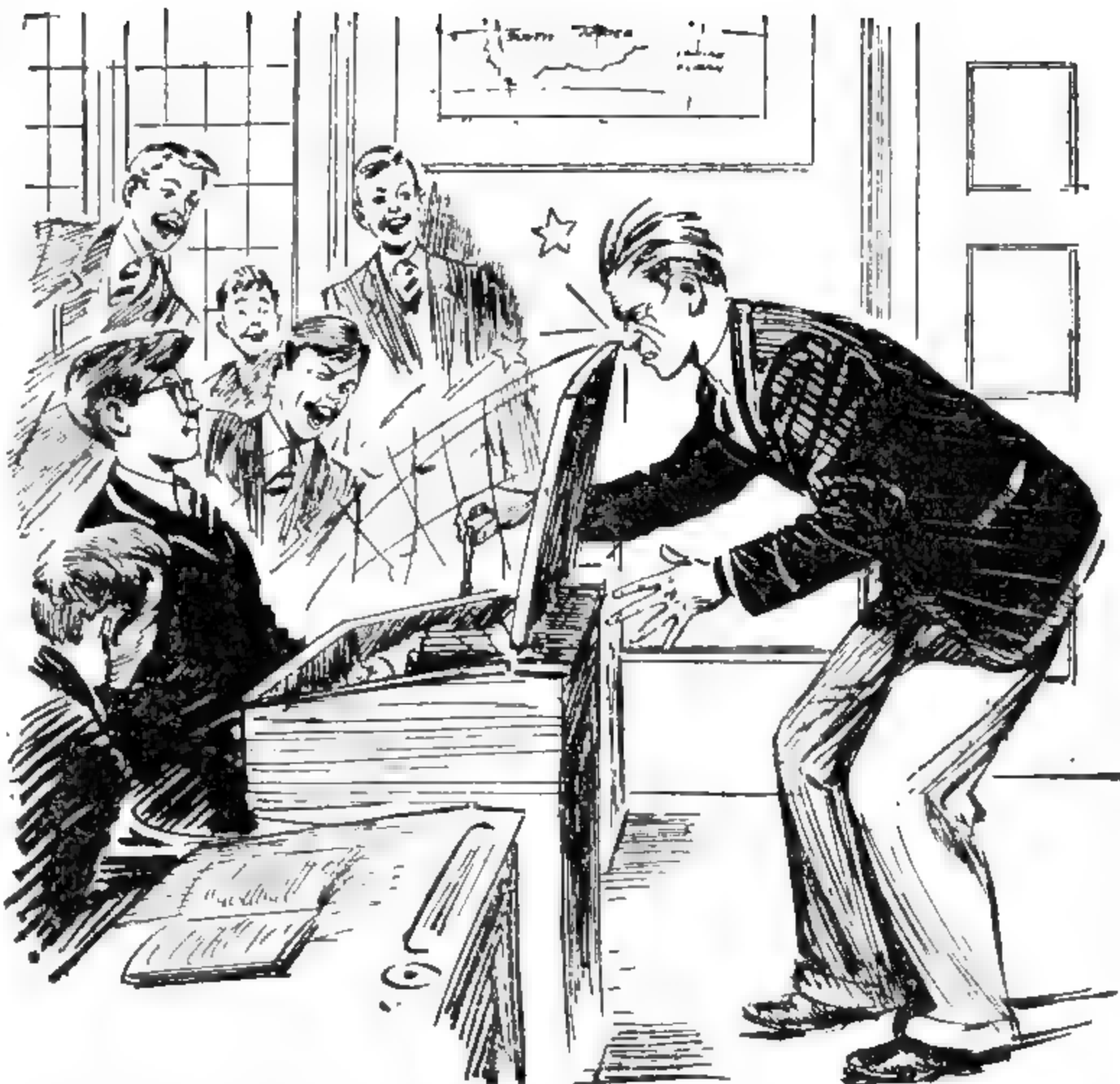
"Probably got cane sugar in it," mumbled Hoskins, who was in a mental fog by this time.

The Head looked at him hard, then said something to him softly, and Hoskins went out of the room. The Head faced the Form.

"I will send Simkins to take charge," he said.

As soon as he had gone the Removites doubled up with mirth.

"Who wants a bit of cane" asked Ray, beaming around. "It's too sickly for me. It's only toffee—specially brittle toffee moulded to cane shape."



Hoskins angrily moved the lever on the desk. Then—whoosh wallop! The lid shot up and thumped him on the nose. Once again the prying prefect had fallen foul of one of inventor Ray's gadgets!

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from those who were not previously in the know.

But Hoskins, of course, had been given a real bit of cane to chew—and he was given something more to chew on by the irate Head in his study, who explained that canes were provided for punishment—not as a delicious tit-bit to chew.

Thereafter, it was a pleasant lesson for the Remove, for Swot Simkins never gave a more serious or severe punishment than a chiding "Now now!" or "Come, come." The time passed pleasantly.

After the lesson, Ray, inventor of the chewable cane, was applauded warmly by all—especially those who had enjoyed the taste of the cane for the first time in their lives. A chap with scientific brains, as Harry said, was a useful chap to have around the place!

THE END

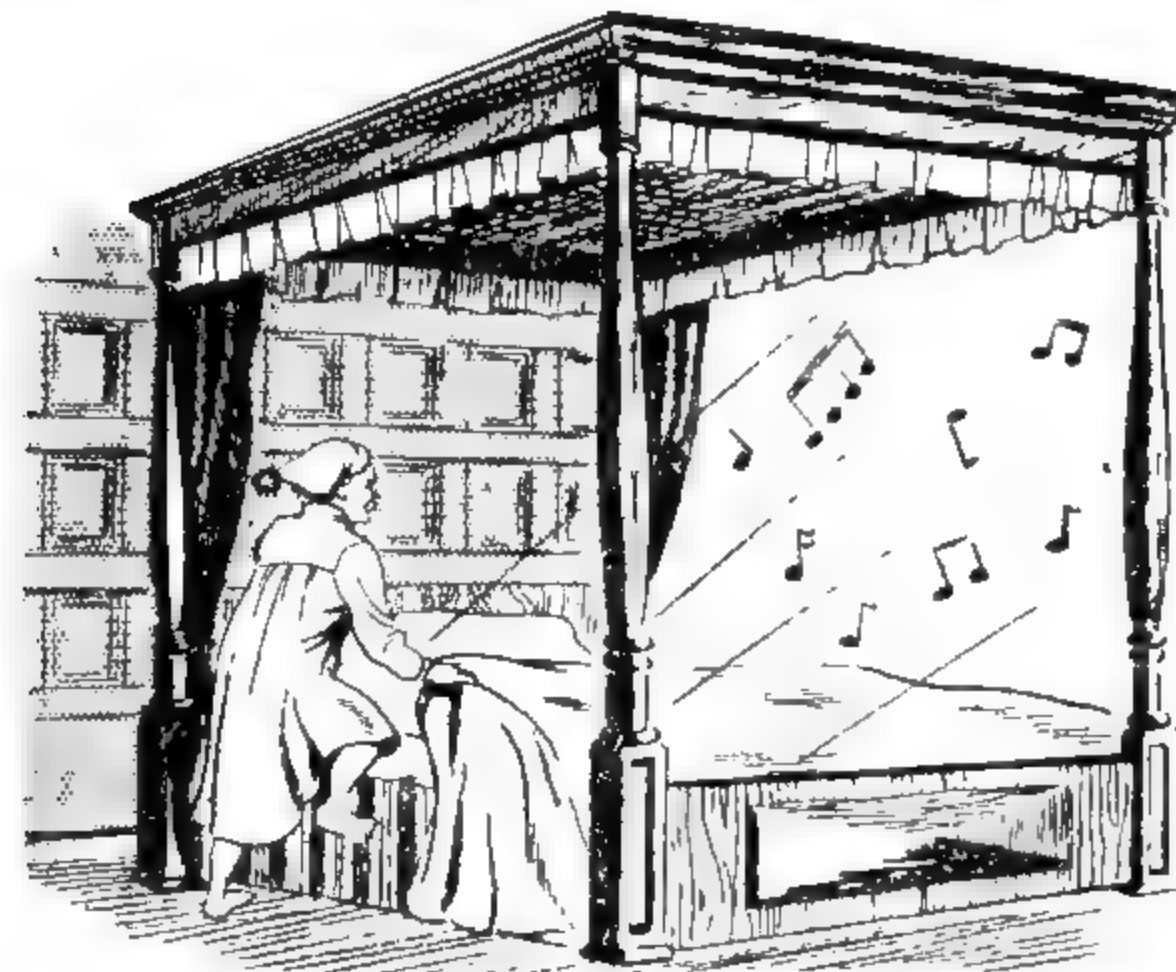


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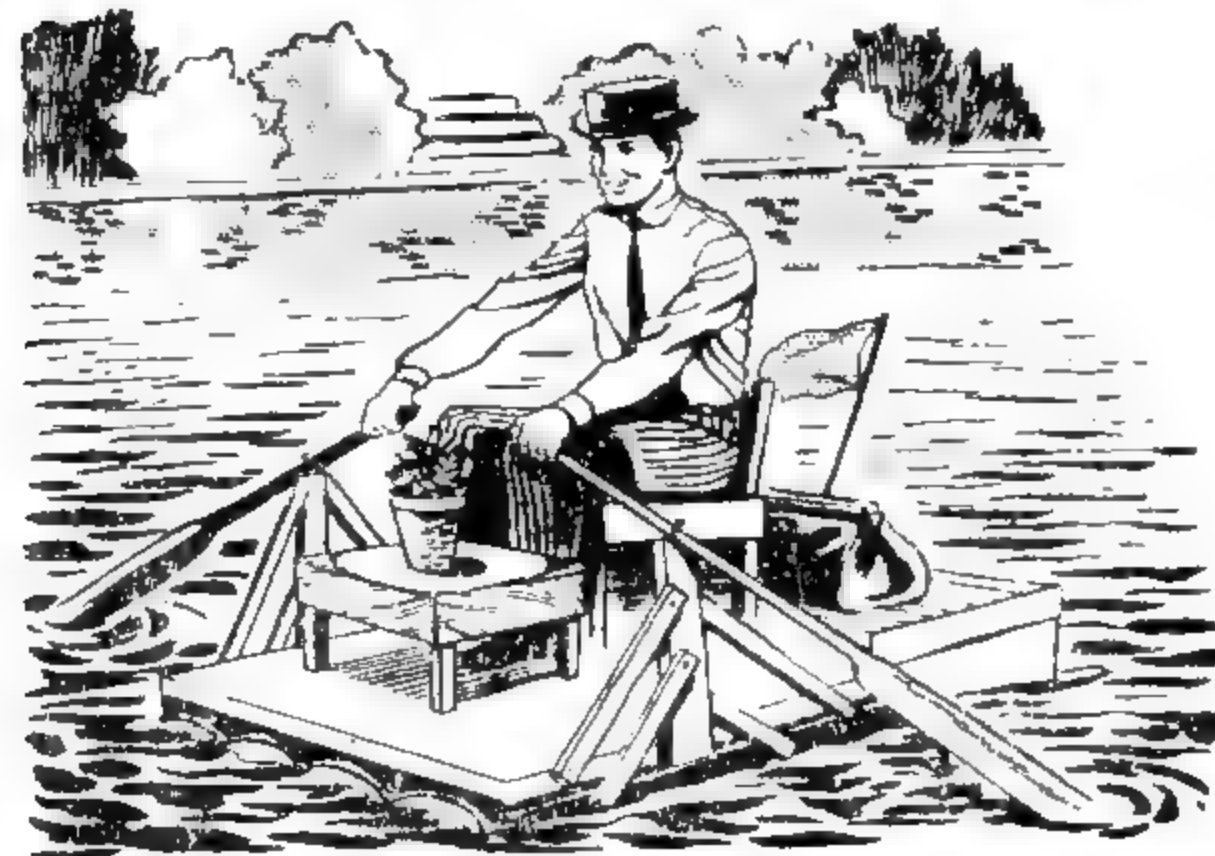
FACTS from NEAR and FAR



If you see someone in London behaving like this, don't call a policeman. For the oddly-acting man is a Water Board engineer, tracing an underground water-main. The frame he's holding is known as a search coil, and it sends electrical impulses through his headphones when it's directly above a buried pipe.



A rich Frenchman of the 19th Century suffered from sleepless nights—and here's how he solved the problem. He bought a huge bed equipped with a built-in musical box. As soon as he sank down on to the mattress, softly-playing opera music would soothe him into slumberland.



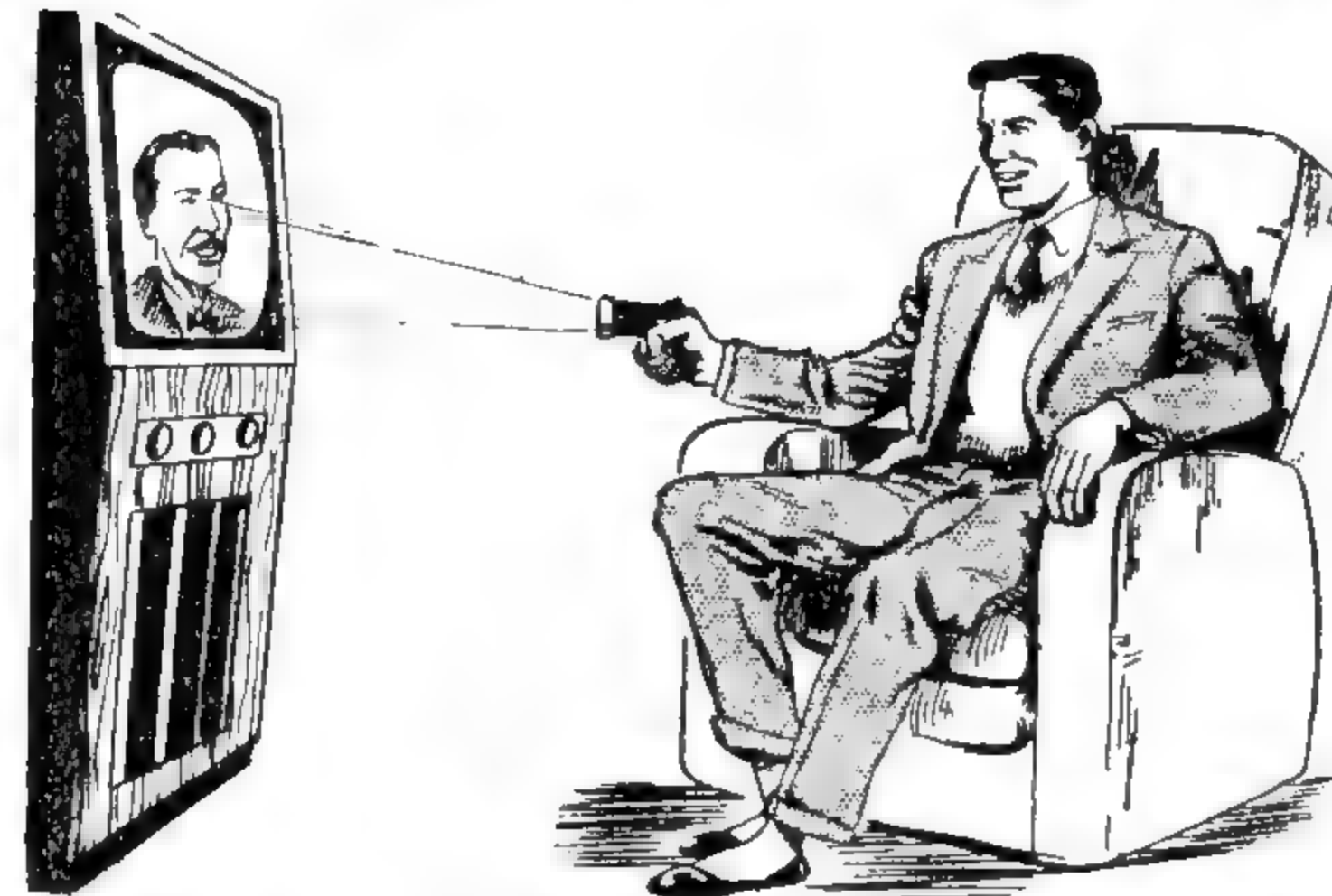
A young student in Holland wanted to go cruising along the canals around Amsterdam. So he built himself this amazing raft, furnishing it with chair and table. And for his watery jaunt he dressed himself in a flat black hat, white shirt and striped trousers!



This road-going "monster" is now being used to haul timber from Canada's forests. Inside each wheel of the log-carrying trailers is an electric motor—and these wheel-driving motors are fed with current from two big generators on the driver's truck.



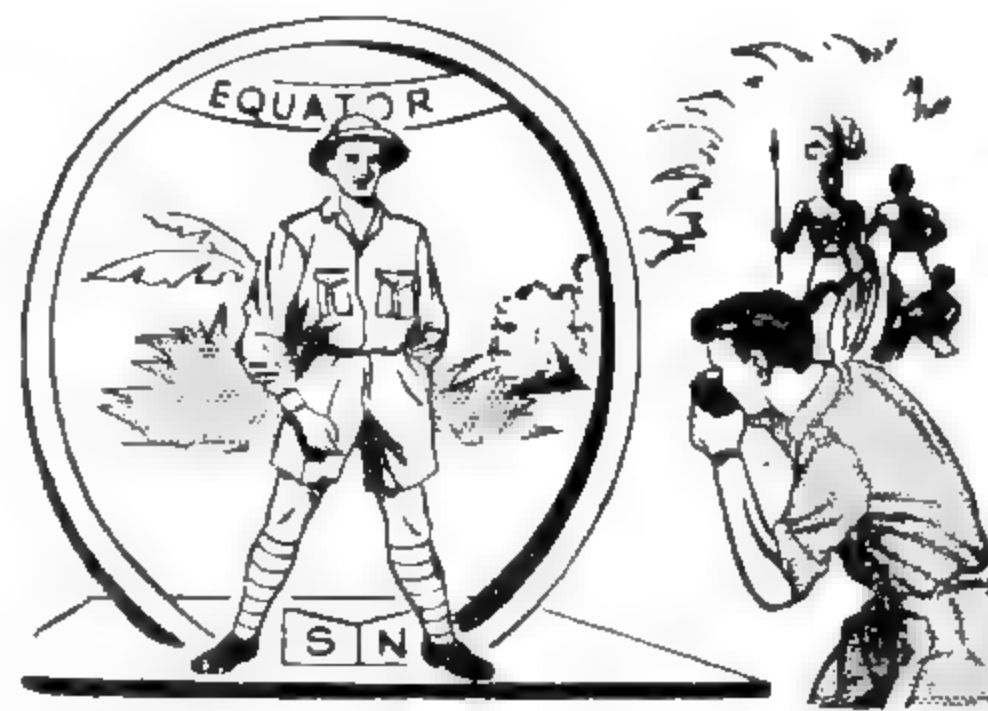
You have a pair of roller skates and can borrow a long broom? Then you, too, can enjoy the latest sport to grip American youngsters. It's called broom hockey. So brush up your skating, lads. This fast-moving, fun-filled game may soon be all the rage here in Britain.



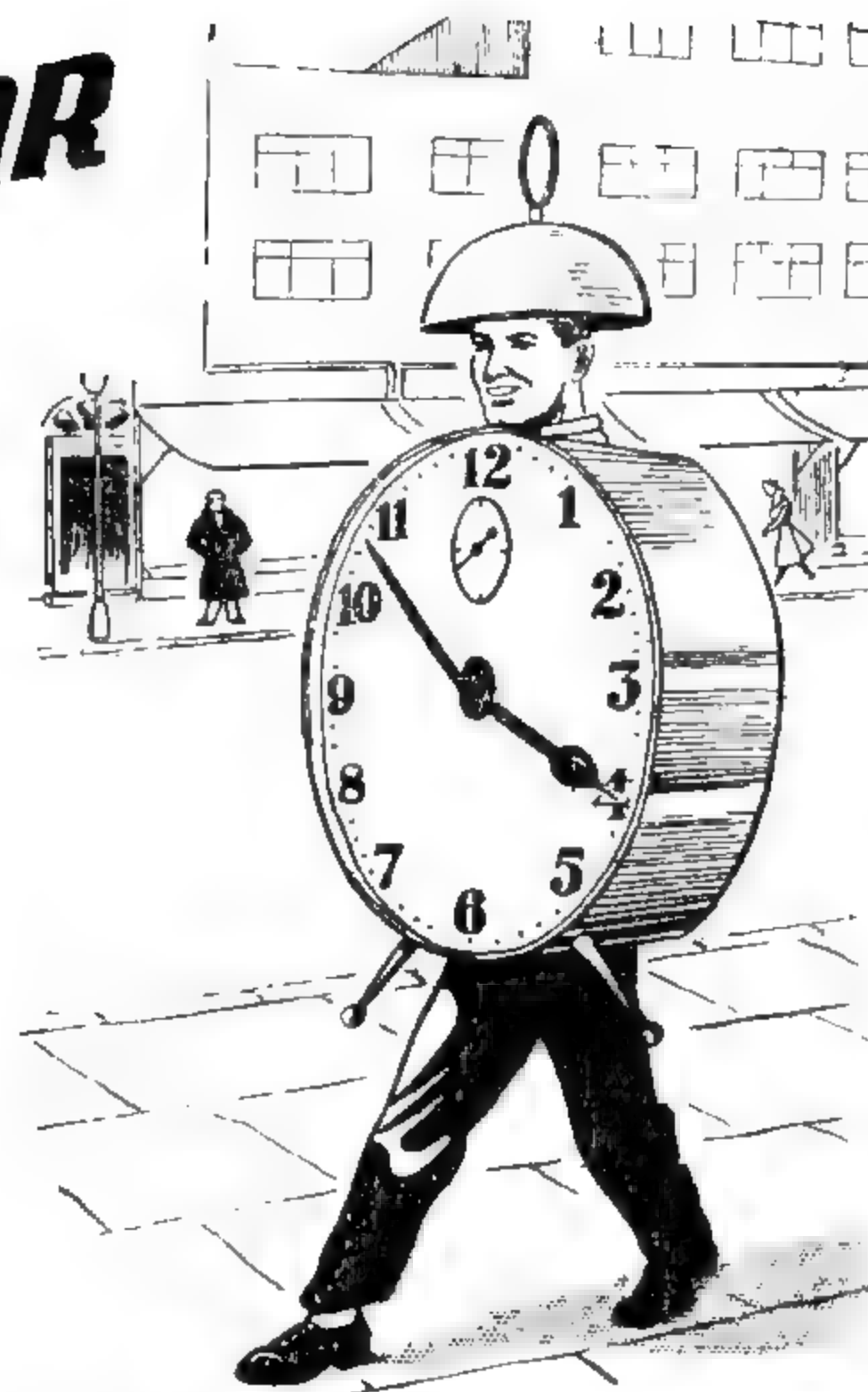
With every expensive television set it sells, an American firm supplies a ray-gun. By pointing the barrel at the set and pressing the trigger, the viewer can "shoot" off the screen any programme or person he dislikes. Only when the trigger is released does the picture return.



India, 1894. A cricket match was played between a team of English Army officers and eleven natives. Because the Indians were new to the game, the soldiers sportingly agreed to handicap themselves by batting with folded umbrellas!



Even experienced travellers get a thrill when crossing the Equator. In Uganda there is a spot where the exact line is marked by a signboard—and where one can be photographed with the right foot in the Southern Hemisphere and the left foot in the Northern.



Although a man in Cologne, Germany, walks the streets dressed as a clock, it doesn't mean that he has time on his hands. He's employed as a walking advertisement by a firm of clock-makers.



An emperor of Ancient China used "secret weapons" to defeat invaders. He made his men build giant box-kites, and place lighted candles inside. The brightly-glowing kites were then flown out over the enemy at night. Battle-hardened warriors, thinking that the stars were about to rain down, fled in panic from the swooping lights.

The CHINESE DRAGON MYSTERY

BY
EDWIN
DALE



THE MONSTER STRIKES!

IT was in China—the land of endless mystery and intrigue—that this almost incredible adventure befell me.

It is a land where, it is said, even the impossible can happen, and does. Even to me—Mr. X!

How can anything happen if it isn't possible for it to do so?

That is the very question that I asked myself when I saw the impossible with my own eyes, whilst I was flying my little run-about plane over the Magic Mountains, in the heart of Central China. They are a dreaded range which the Chinese, in their picturesque manner of speech, described as "The Mountains-of-Things-Out-of-This-World."

I was on my way to call upon an old friend, "Johnny" Mi Tong, whom I had last met many years before in England. Although Johnny had been born in China, he was practically English in habits and speech, for he had lived and studied for most of his life in this country. He was exceptionally clever, and a highly-skilled engineer.

He had gone to China to bury himself away in a lonely chalet forty miles from Pantang, in the snow-

clad Magic Mountains, where he planned to work in complete solitude upon a hush-hush invention.

Learning that I was in China, he had written to me telling me that his new invention was now completed, and saying he would like me to be one of the first to see it.

I had answered, and told him that if he would mark out a safe landing-ground for me upon some hard snow, near his chalet, I would "drop in on him" almost at once.

I was very curious to have a look at his invention, and see what it was all about—for he had given no-one, not even me, the slightest hint as to what it was.

Because of his move from England to the Magic Mountains, I had guessed that it had something to do with snow, but, apart from that, I was completely in the dark.

When I reached Pantang, I spotted a very interesting report in a local newspaper. Translated into English it read:

THE WHINING MONSTER STRIKES AGAIN

The papier-mâché monster, Si-Khu-Kha, which mysteriously disappeared from the streets of

Mr. X Unmasks a Plot to Rob Travellers in the Magic Mountains

Pantang, whilst taking part in the Ceremony of the Rising Sun, has come to life among the Magic Mountains, and is attacking wealthy mandarins as they cross the mountains to journey to other parts of China.

Its latest victim is the mandarin, Fuchan-Pu. Whilst crossing a mountain-slope ten miles from Pantang, he and his attendants were suddenly nearly deafened by its dreaded whine. Then the demon screamed into their midst, breathing fire and smoke, and there, as usual, laid its overpowering Sleep Egg.

When the mandarin and his men awoke from its sleep-inducing effect it was to find that the monster had departed, taking with it everything of value they had been carrying.

Once again, the impossible has happened—among those mountains of amazing magic.

Naturally I was interested in the report. But I must admit that I thought it greatly exaggerated, until I saw, and heard, the whining monster myself!

But, before I saw it I saw something else which seemed, at the time, even more impossible.

I had actually sighted Johnny Mi Tong's lonely chalet a few miles ahead of me, when suddenly I saw a message on the steep slope beneath me, addressed to myself, written in gigantic letters in the snow. The words stood out clearly, as though they had been written by a giant's pen:

"Mr. X. HELP! JOHNNY"

The message gave me a tremendous shock, for it was written upon a slope so steep that I doubted if any man could have had the strength to climb up it unaided.

I determined to investigate that writing at once, and, as things happened, my curiosity cost me dearly.

There were skis fitted to my plane in place of landing-wheels, but the nearest place that I could find to sit her down was upon a level glacier half-a-mile from the mountain slope.

When I had landed, I fitted skis to my feet, and set off towards the slope.

It took me quite a while to get near it, for it was a hard up-hill climb, and eventually I found the slope too steep for ski-climbing. Then how had that message, each letter of which was at least 10 feet tall, been written there in the snow?

I stared at those huge letters in growing amazement. They had not been made by either snowshoes or skis. Each letter consisted of a broad, regular line, with a thin line to each side of it.

"That beats me!" I muttered. "A lettering artist, working with brush or pen on a piece of paper, couldn't have drawn those lines more symmetrically, and I know no sleigh or snow-vehicle that would leave a track like that!"

And then I felt my blood suddenly start to run cold.

For, at that moment, the start of a faint blood-chilling whine sounded from across the distant snow!

If I had not read that cutting about the Whining Monster the sound might not have disturbed me, for it was little more than the faint howl of a distant wind.

But it grew rapidly in volume, until all the surrounding white-capped mountains were echoing to a mournful, high-pitched whine. It grew louder—louder—louder!

Then, suddenly, at close range, I saw the Whining Monster!

It flashed suddenly over the crest of a mountain-ridge not far away from me.

It was like a prehistoric reptile—except that it had no tail at all. Where the tail should have been there was a flurry of snow, closing in on the monster's wake like a pursuing whirlwind.

Its body was of every colour of the rainbow, and fully a quarter of it was its hideous head. There were two protruding eyes that blazed in the wintry sunlight like twin heliographs.

In shape it was something like a crouching mouse, for I could see no legs, even though it was gliding over the surface of the snow at a speed which must have been more than a mile a minute.

I had seen many such fearsome-looking monsters taking part in processions in Chinese towns. There these ugly monsters, made of painted papier-mâché, bamboo and wood, had always amused me.

But out here, in the still mountains, to see one racing towards me, breathing fire and smoke, and raising a miniature snow-storm in its wake, was a very different thing.

The whine now seemed to be piercing my eardrums as the hideous monster headed straight towards me!

Convinced that I was its intended victim, I dodged swiftly behind the first snow-covered boulder that I could see.

But then I saw that it was not me that the Whining Monster intended to attack, but my plane.

Reaching the valley where I had left the plane, it turned suddenly towards it, and then pulled itself up dead alongside it, shooting a stream of snow high into the air to each side of the aircraft.

I watched it, fascinated.

Slowly it turned its large, hideous head towards my plane. Then two streaks of vivid yellow flame spurted from its nostrils.

The flames hit my plane squarely in the fuselage, and turned it instantly into a blazing bonfire.

Before I could do anything, the Whining Monster turned, and sped away across the snow, hidden from my view by its own self-made, whirling blizzard.

It had deliberately destroyed my plane, leaving me stranded among the white-clad mountains!

VICTIM OF THE "SLEEP EGG"

I KNEW that to attempt to approach the blazing plane, with the flames roaring around its well-filled petrol-tanks, would be akin to suicide.

There was nothing to be done but to turn my back upon it, and conclude my journey to Johnny Mi Tong's chalet—on skis. I was wondering anxiously what I would find there.

I had not gone far before I heard the shattering explosion of my plane's petrol tanks. Turning in my tracks, I saw that all that was left of my plane was a massive column of smoke, rising towards the wintry sky.

"Someone is going to pay for this!" I muttered. "I still don't believe in ghosts—even among these Magic Mountains!"

When at last I reached Johnny Mi Tong's chalet, I received another shock.

For no one was there!

"Johnny! *Johnny!*" I shouted. "Where are you?"

My only answer was my own voice—echoed back by the walls of the empty chalet!

I started to search the place. I knew that Johnny had been living there with four trustworthy Chinese servants who looked after his needs, and helped him with the manual part of his work.

There was no sign or trace of either Johnny or them. In the kitchen there was a half-prepared meal.

In Johnny's workshop there were signs that he had been suddenly called away from some half-completed job.

Then, upon one side of the workshop, I saw a solid-looking door in the wall, secured by three strong padlocks. I didn't doubt that this was a vault-like room which Johnny had built for himself to house his hush-hush invention.

Examining the door closely, I saw that it was made of solid steel, and the padlocks bore traces of having been attacked by a jemmy. Someone had tried to break into Johnny's strong-room, but the padlocks had proved too tough.

"Ghosts," I told myself, "don't need to use jemmies!"

I decided that the first thing to do must be to break open that steel door, and find out what Johnny was keeping there.

To do that I would need an oxy-acetylene cutter. Not being able to find such a thing in the chalet, I loaded up a sleigh with food and blankets from the house, and set off to buy one in Pantang.

Reaching Pantang, my first action was to pay a visit to Captain Khang-Su, Chief of the Pantang Police.

He had a parchment-skinned face as expressionless as that of the Sphinx. Right from the first, I didn't take to him, and I soon realised that I was a far from welcome visitor.

"But, surely," I said to him, "you are going to do something about the disappearance of my friend, Johnny Mi Tong."

"No, Meester X, I intend to do nothing!" he said. "What happens in the Magic Mountains is no concern of human police."

"But it's your job!" I stormed. "You must try to solve the mystery!"

"No, Meester X, you are wrong!" he lisped. "In England you have a mystery and you set to work to solve it. In China you have a mystery and you shrug your shoulders and forget it, if you are a wise man! That is what I advise you to do!"

"Forget it—not likely!" I snapped. "I'm going back into those mountains to find out what has happened to my friend!"

"That would be velly foolish of you!" lisped Khang-Su. "The Whining Demon has destroyed your plane to warn you that you are not wanted in the Magic Mountains. To ignore that warning would be velly unwise!"

Realising that I would get no help from him, I left Police Headquarters, and went to the bazaar to buy an oxy-acetylene cutter.

Having done so much man-hunting in my chequered life, and having been hunted myself, I have developed a sort of sixth sense which warns me when I am being followed.

I had that feeling now, although I could see no one following me.

Acting upon a sudden hunch, I bought *two* oxy-acetylene cutters, one of which I hid among my blankets on my sleigh. The other I put into the pack on my back.

Then I set off back for the chalet.

I had travelled half my journey, and was a good twenty miles from Pantang, when, once again, I heard the whine of the Demon coming from the surrounding mountains.

A few seconds later I saw the monster racing straight for me over the snow. This time there was nowhere to seek cover.

Snorting flame and smoke, the monster raced past within a few yards of my sleigh, almost deafening me with its high-pitched scream. The smoke that it threw off half-screened it from me, and I could not get a clear look at it. As it sped away, the flurry of snow behind it completely blotted it from my view.

Then I saw that it had left, lying in the snow in its wake, an oval object that appeared to be a large egg! Immediately I remembered the "Sleep Egg" which the Whining Monster was supposed to lay

when it first attacked its intended victims. I began to walk warily towards it.

I had almost reached it when suddenly a low "*ph-lop*" came from its centre. The next moment its shell-like casing split to fragments, and I found myself enveloped in a cloud of sickly-smelling vapour.

I had just time to realise that the exploded "egg" had thrown out a cloud of some powerful drug in vapour form—and then my mind went blank, and I sank down into the snow, and remembered no more!

A CROOK OVERTHROWN

WHEN I opened my eyes again, about half-an-hour later, there was no trace left either of the vapour or of the Whining Monster.

The snow was too hard-frozen for the Monster to have left any tracks behind. Looking around, I saw my sleigh at my side, undisturbed, and clearly untouched.

Then why had the Whining Monster attacked me?

It was only when I reached Johnny's chalet that I discovered the reason. When I unpacked my pack from my back I found that my second oxy-acetylene cutter was no longer in it!

"Now I am getting somewhere!" I told myself.



The "egg" left by the flame-spouting dragon suddenly cracked open. A thick cloud of vapour arose to send Mr. X reeling backwards, drugged into unconsciousness. The mysterious monster had struck at the adventurer in a fantastic way!

"The Monster came back whilst I was drugged and took that cutter from my pack. That tells me that someone means to have a crack at entering Johnny's strong-room ahead of me. I wonder if he's been there already!"

I remembered the feeling I had had in Pantang of being followed. Evidently someone connected with the monster had learnt what I had bought, and had guessed the purpose for which I wanted it.

To my relief I discovered that the second oxy-acetylene cutter, which I had hidden among the blankets on my sleigh, was still there.

Arming myself with it, I hurried to Johnny Mi Tong's workshop. The steel door was still intact.

Whoever had drugged me had not known that I had a second "blow-lamp." Probably he thought I would have to return to Pantang for another one before I could enter the strong-room.

I set to work at once. At the end of an hour, I had cut through the last of the three padlocks.

I dragged open the steel door, and there, before my eyes, stood Johnny Mi Tong's wonderful invention. And also the explanation of the mystery of the Whining Monster!

The thing which I was looking at can best be described as a wonderfully ingenious snow motorcycle!

Built low to the ground it had a pair of sweeping handle-bars fitted above a single squat-like ski. On a narrow bar beneath the handlebars there was a bucket-seat for the rider. Behind that, at the end of the bar, there was a large air-screw fitted to revolve inside a protective rim.

The air-screw was powered by a 100 c.c. two-stroke motorcycle engine, and the whole of the weight at the back was supported on two narrow runners.

In a flash I realised that it was the track of this strange machine of Johnny's invention which had been responsible for the writing in the snow which I had seen from my plane.

I didn't doubt that there was one of these snow-motorcycles *inside* the papier-mâché Whining Monster which had vanished from a procession in Pantang. But it could not have been Johnny who had used it to rob wealthy

mandarins crossing the Magic Mountains. Johnny would have a key to the padlocks of this strong-room, and would not need to steal an oxy-acetylene cutter from me, to open the steel door!

I decided to get the machine out, and use it to hunt the mountains for Johnny. I was now convinced that he had been captured, with one of his machines, by some crook who had overpowered all in the chalet with that same drug he used in his "Sleep Eggs."

There was petrol in the machine's small tank, and I pushed it out at once on to the snow in front of the chalet, and started up its engine.

Then I had a sudden shock—a bad one!

Looking up towards the mountains I saw the "Whining Monster" not half-a-mile away, speeding once again, straight towards me!

This time there had been no deafening whine to herald its approach. Evidently that whine was made with something, like a shrill syren, fitted over the exhaust to produce scaring effects.

Evidently too, it was a bad shock for the crook inside the "demon" to see me outside the chalet with the second snow motor-cycle from Johnny's strong-room.

Realising that I had something with which I could effectively give chase to him, the crook throttled down and swung round in a wide circle. Then opening his throttle again, he set off in a mad dash back into the mountains.

"Now's my chance to find out what's happened to Johnny," I muttered. "I'm going after that fellow, whoever he is."

I dropped into the bucket-seat, lifted my feet to the protruding foot-rest, and gingerly opened up the throttle. I discovered swiftly that the machine was as easy to handle on snow as an ordinary motor-cycle on a more solid road.

With practically no resistance beneath its centre ski and side-runners it picked up speed like a rocket, and I soon found that with the power from the whirling propeller it could soar up even the steepest mountain-slope like a bird.

Then I made another tremendous discovery about the speeding mount beneath me. I was overtaking my flying prey hand over fist!

The truth flashed home to me. This machine which Johnny had kept locked up in his strong-room was a vastly improved version of the one which the unknown crook had stolen from him and installed inside the papier-mâché demon.

After a thrilling chase of five miles over glaciers and mountain-slopes, climbing all the time towards the mountain-tops, I had gained on my prey so much that I was barely fifty yards behind him.

But how was I going to stop him with both of us travelling at high speed?

I slipped out my six-gun from its armpit holster,

and sent a warning bullet screaming over the top of the papier-mâché monster.

Either the man inside it didn't hear it, or he decided to ignore it. I didn't know about him, but I *did* know that my own petrol supply was beginning to get a bit low.

"All right, you've asked for it—and you're going to get it!" I muttered. "With my next shot I'm going to try to shoot away the blades of your air-screw."

I took very careful aim over my handlebars.

Cr-ack!

To my immense relief I saw splinters of airscrew fly out from beneath the tail of the Monster. The next moment the weird-looking contraption veered sharply round, skidded madly over on to its side, and began rolling over and over down the steep slope.

I followed after it. When I reached the foot of the steep mountain-slope it was to find it lying, a heap of wreckage, at the foot of an icy boulder, with the crook tangled up inside it, groaning loudly with the pain of a broken leg.

As he turned hate-filled eyes up towards me, I gasped.

For it was Captain Khang-Su—the Chief of the Pantang Police!

"A thousand evils befall you, Meester X. You have been too clever for me!" he lisped savagely.

"Now be merciful, and get me to hospital in Pantang!"

"I'll be merciful as soon as you've told me where you're keeping Johnny Mi Tong a prisoner," I told him.

He pointed to a nearby mountain-top.

"You will find a cave up there," he said. "Inside it you will find your friend."

When I reached the cave I found it to be like an Aladdin's cave, filled with the rich plunder that Khang-Su had stolen from the wealthy mandarins. There, too, I found Johnny Mi Tong and his Chinese servants, inside a large cage, huddled for warmth over a primus stove.

Khang-Su had kidnapped Johnny in order to force him to teach the crook how to handle the snow motor-cycle, having fitted a flame-thrower. But Johnny had snatched the opportunity to write the message on the mountain slope. He knew that I would soon be flying overhead.

That was the end of the "impossible" happenings in the Magic Mountains, and of Captain Khang-Su's crooked activities.

The most ingenious part of his whole scheme? It was his use of the "Sleep Egg" drug bombs, for they enabled him to rob his victims without allowing them to see him emerge from the dreaded Whining Monster.

THE END

and The MAGIC FIRE-STICKS

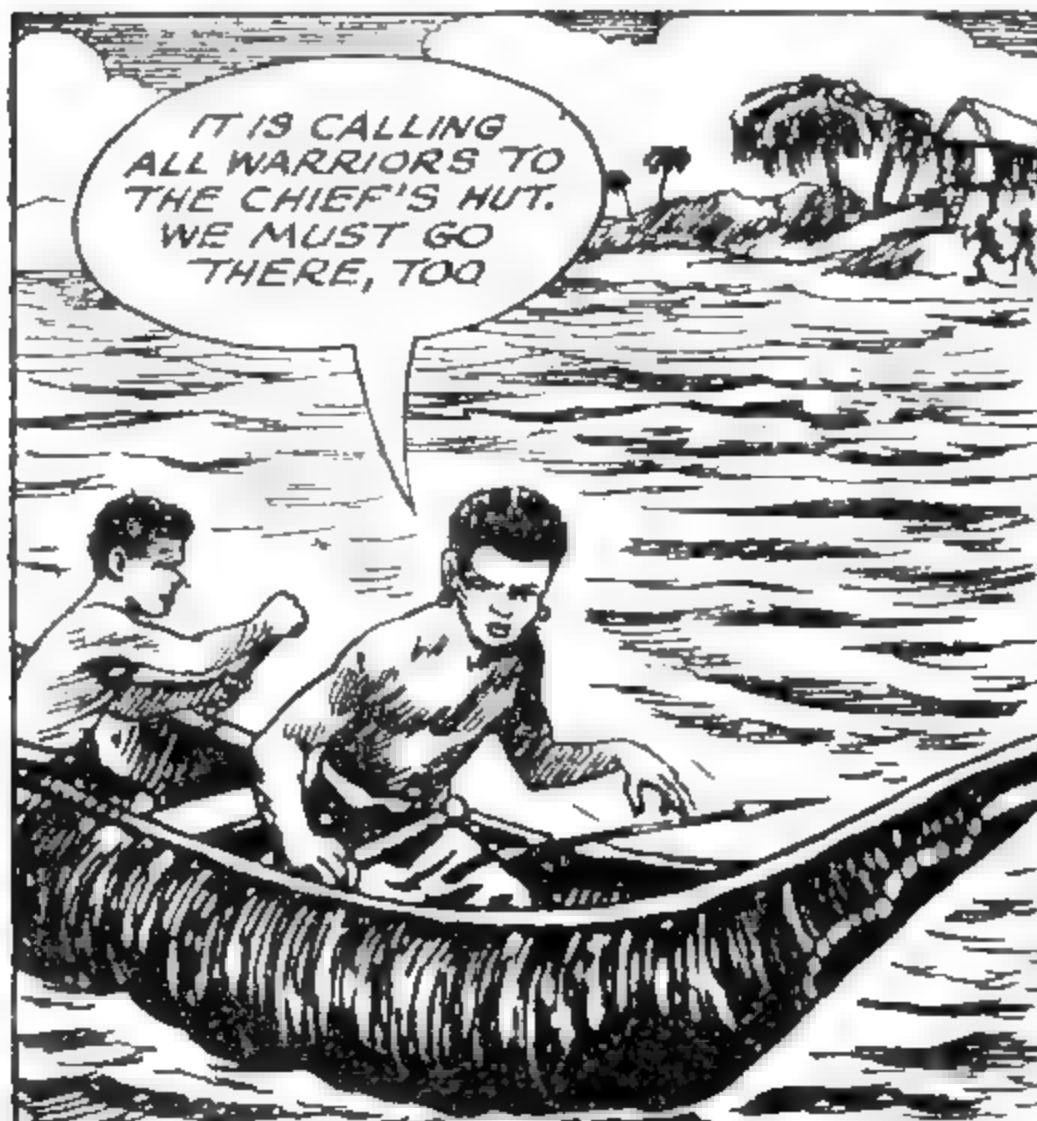
BY GUY DEAKIN



JULU AND HIS FRIEND WANGI WERE SPEAR-FISHING OFF THE SOUTH SEAS ISLAND WHERE THEY LIVED WHEN SUDDENLY THEY HEARD A DISTANT THROBBING NOISE

LISTEN, WANGI! IT IS THE ALARM DRUM

I HEAR IT, TOO, JULU. IT MUST BE A WARNING OF DANGER



IT IS CALLING ALL WARRIORS TO THE CHIEF'S HUT. WE MUST GO THERE, TOO



TENSE WITH EXCITEMENT, THE CHUMS PADDED SWIFTLY FOR THE SHORE

OUR SPEARMEN ARE ALREADY RUNNING FROM ALL DIRECTIONS!



BEACHING THEIR CANOE, JULU AND WANGI HURRIED TO JOIN THE ISLANDERS OUTSIDE THE CHIEF'S HUT

THE CHIEF IS ARMED FOR BATTLE. IT IS AS I FEARED. OUR TRIBE MUST BE IN DEADLY PERIL



THE CHIEF RAISED HIS HAND FOR SILENCE-- AND THEN SPOKE

PREPARE FOR BATTLE, MY WARRIORS! NEWS HAS COME THAT ENEMIES IN WAR CANOES ARE HEADING FOR OUR ISLAND. WE MUST BEAT THEM OFF. NOT ONE MUST BE ALLOWED TO SET FOOT ON OUR SHORES!

AS THE SPEARMEN AND BOWMEN SPED TO THEIR DEFENCE POSITIONS, JULO WHISPERED TO WANGI



WE ARE NOT YET WARRIORS. BUT WE NOT BE LEFT OUT. YOU COME WITH ME

JULO LED THE WAY ON TO THE ROCKS OF THE LAGOON



THE ENEMY IS STILL AFAR OFF. FROM HERE WE SEE IF HE TRIES TO LAND

SUDDENLY JULO CAUGHT SIGHT OF SOMETHING UNUSUAL



HIST, WANGI! WHAT IS THIS? IT LOOKS LIKE BOX FROM WHITE MAN'S SHIP

IT IS VERY STRANGE. LET US DRAG IT ON TO BEACH AND OPEN IT

A FEW MINUTES LATER—



TAKE CARE, JULO. WHITE MAN'S BOX MAY CONTAIN EVIL JU-JU

EAGERLY JULO OPENED IT



EE-EE! IT IS FULL OF STICKS AND LONG ROUND THINGS LIKE PODS

NO GOOD TO EAT. NO GOOD TO US

JUST THEN THE WITCH-DOCTOR CALLED TO THE CHUMS



HO, THERE! BRING STICKS FOR THE COOKING FIRE. WHILE WAITING FOR THE ENEMY OUR WARRIORS CAN FILL THEIR STOMACHS

AS THE STRANGE STICKS IN THE BOX APPEARED TO BE USELESS, JULO TOOK OUT A HANDFUL AND TOSSED THEM ON TO THE FIRE



THESE SHOULD MAKE GOOD BLAZE

THE RESULT WAS STARTLING. FOR THE STICKS WERE REALLY SIGNAL ROCKETS! AS THEY EXPLODED INTO BALLS OF FIRE, THE WARRIORS BOLTED FOR THEIR LIVES!



FLEE! FLEE! A BAD JU-JU IS AMONGST US!

STORMING WITH RAGE, THE WITCH-DOCTOR TURNED ON JULO AND WANGI



YOU PUT JU-JU STICKS ON FIRE. YOU MAKE WARRIORS PLENTY FRIGHTENED. YOU SHALL BE PUNISHED

THE WITCH-DOCTOR POINTED TO THE MOUNTAIN OF HI-OA



TAKE THE REST OF THE STICKS UP YONDER, AND CAST THEM INTO THE SPIRIT HOLE. NEVER AGAIN SHALL THEY BRING FEAR TO OUR PEOPLE!

TO MAKE SURE THAT THE CHUMS OBEYED THE WITCH-DOCTOR'S COMMAND, A WARRIOR WAS ORDERED TO GO WITH THEM



I AM MUCH AFRAID, JULO. SPIRIT HOLE FULL OF GHOSTS. WE NOT STAY THERE LONG

WE DROP BOX DOWN AND GET AWAY PLENTY FAST. NO LET SPIRITS CATCH US

THE MOMENT THEY REACHED THE HOLE, THEY CAST THE SIGNAL ROCKETS INTO THE DEPTHS



NOW LET US HURRY AWAY LEST EVIL BEFALLS US

THE CHUMS AND THEIR GUARD HAD GONE BUT A FEW YARDS WHEN JULO STOPPED WITH A GASP



OO-EE!
ENEMY WAR CANOES
APPROACH FROM BACK
OF BIG ROCK. OUR
WARRIORS NOT SEE
THEM. WE MUST
SOUND ALARM!

IT TOOK JULO BUT A FEW SECONDS TO CUT DOWN A LONG, HOLLOW BAMBOO TO USE AS A TRUMPET. THEN--

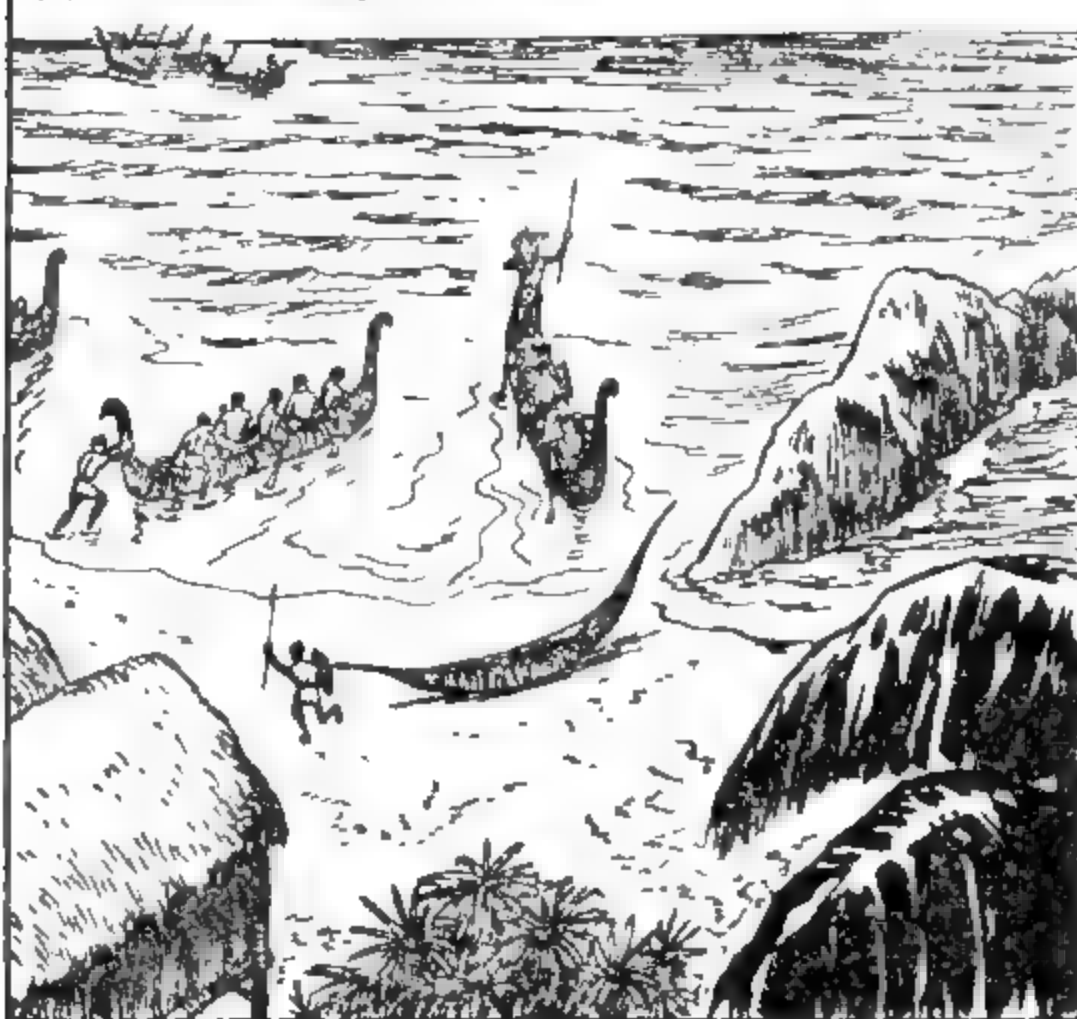


WOO-AH... WOO-AH...

WOO-AH... WOO-WOO-WOO...

JULO
HAS SIGHTED
THE ENEMY.
QUICK--THE
CANOES!

WITHIN A MINUTE THE CHIEF WAS LEADING HIS WARRIORS INTO ACTION



AND THEN THE BATTLE BEGAN



BEAT
BACK THE EVIL
INVADERS! ALLOW
NOT ONE OF THEM
TO REACH OUR
ISLAND. FIGHT!
FIGHT!

SLOWLY BUT SURELY THE INVADERS WERE FORCED TO GIVE WAY



OO-EE!
WE ARE WINNING,
MY BROTHERS!
THE ENEMY
RETREATS!

FROM THE MOUNTAINSIDE, HOWEVER, JULO SUDDENLY SAW THAT THEIR COMRADES' TRIUMPH WAS LIKELY TO BE SHORT-LIVED



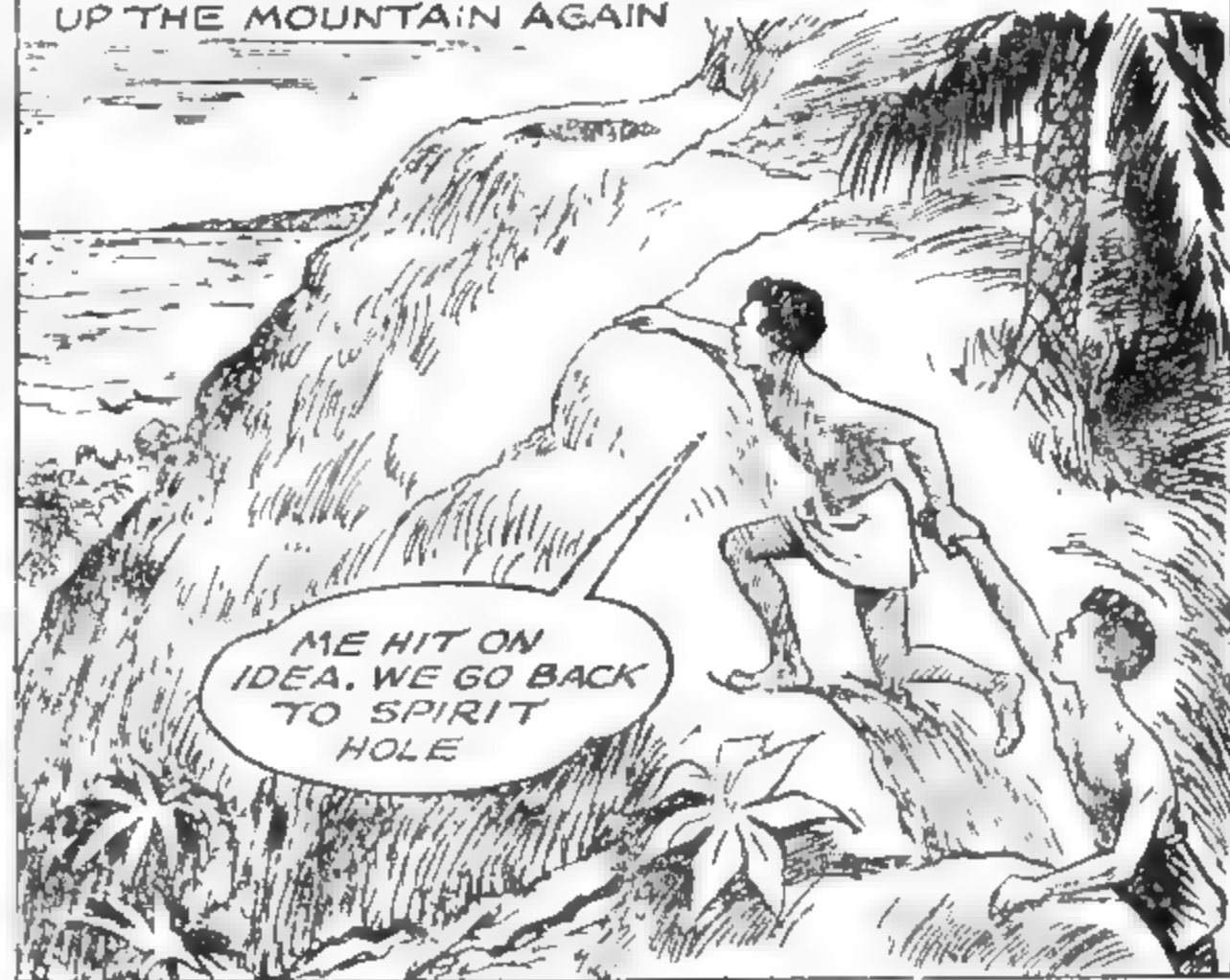
LOOK, WANGI!
MORE ENEMY
CANOES APPROACH
ROUND ROCK. OUR
CHIEF HAS BEEN
TRICKED!

IT IS A TRAP! THEY
WILL CUT OFF OUR WARRIORS'
RETREAT--AND THE INVADERS' MIGHT
IS MUCH GREATER THAN OURS

THE WARRIOR WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED THE CHUMS WENT RUSHING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE TO WARN THE VILLAGE



TO WANGI'S AMAZEMENT, JULO GRABBED HIM BY THE WRIST AND STARTED TO DRAG HIM UP THE MOUNTAIN AGAIN



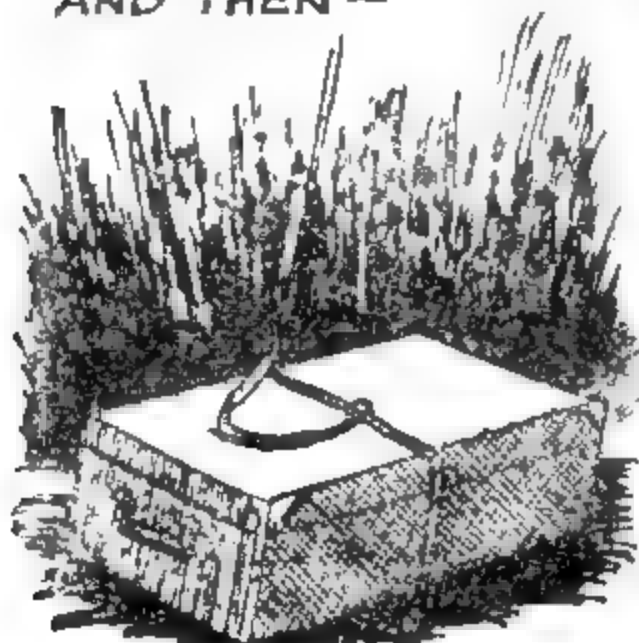
JULO HALTED ON THE EDGE OF THE SPIRIT HOLE AND CUT A LONG LENGTH OF CREEPER. WANGI WATCHED FEARFULLY



WHILE WANGI, TREMBLING WITH FEAR, HELD ONE END OF THE CREEPER, JULO GRITTED HIS TEETH AND DESCENDED



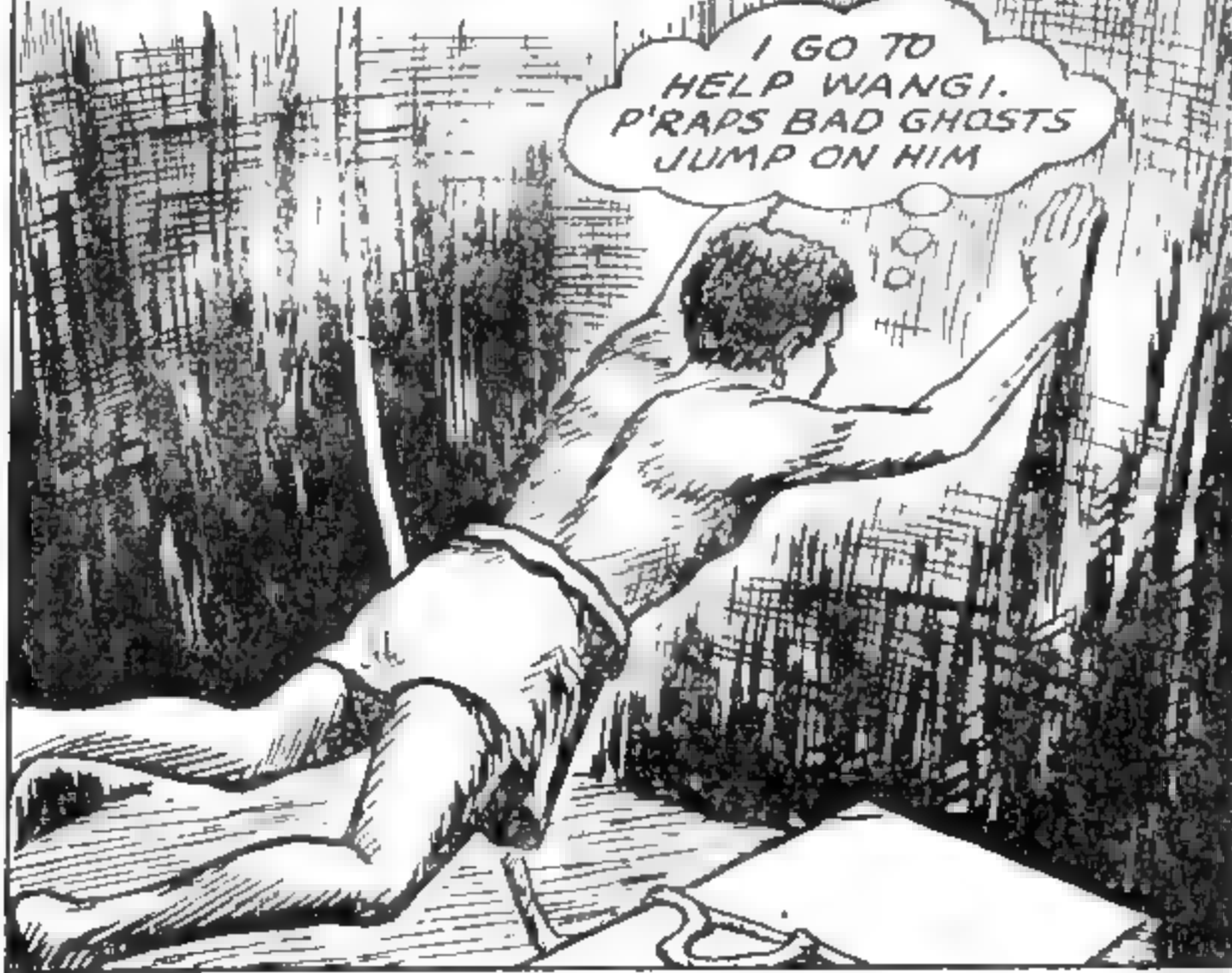
TENSE WITH ANXIETY, JULO AT LAST REACHED THE BOTTOM OF THE SPIRIT HOLE. IN THE EERIE GLOOM HIS GROPING HANDS FOUND THE BOX. SWIFTLY HE TIED HIS END OF THE CREEPER TO IT, AND THEN —



BEFORE WANGI COULD DO SO, JULO HEARD HIM UTTER A FRANTIC CRY-AND THE ROPE WENT SLACK



ANXIETY FOR HIS CHUM SPURRED JULO TO MAKE A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE FROM THE SPIRIT HOLE



SKILFULLY JULO CLIMBED HIGHER AND HIGHER



AT LONG LAST HE REACHED THE TOP. AS HE DID SO, A GASP OF HORROR BROKE FROM HIS LIPS



JULO HESITATED FOR ONLY TWO SECONDS. THEN HE SWIFTLY BEGAN TO HAUL UP THE BOX OF SIGNAL ROCKETS



AS SOON AS THE BOX WAS AT THE TOP, JULO UNTIED THE CREEPER AND SHINNED UP A NEARBY TREE



HIS HEART THUMPING, HE TIED THE CREEPER TO A BOUGH



THE NEXT MOMENT, HE SWUNG DOWN AND LASHED OUT WITH HIS FEET AT THE SNARLING ANIMAL



OKI, OKI!
YOU SEND HIM
FLYING INTO
SPIRIT HOLE!

WITH THE JUNGLE CAT NOW
DISPOSED OF, THE CHUMS
PICKED UP THE BOX AND
RUSHED WITH IT DOWN
THE MOUNTAIN SIDE



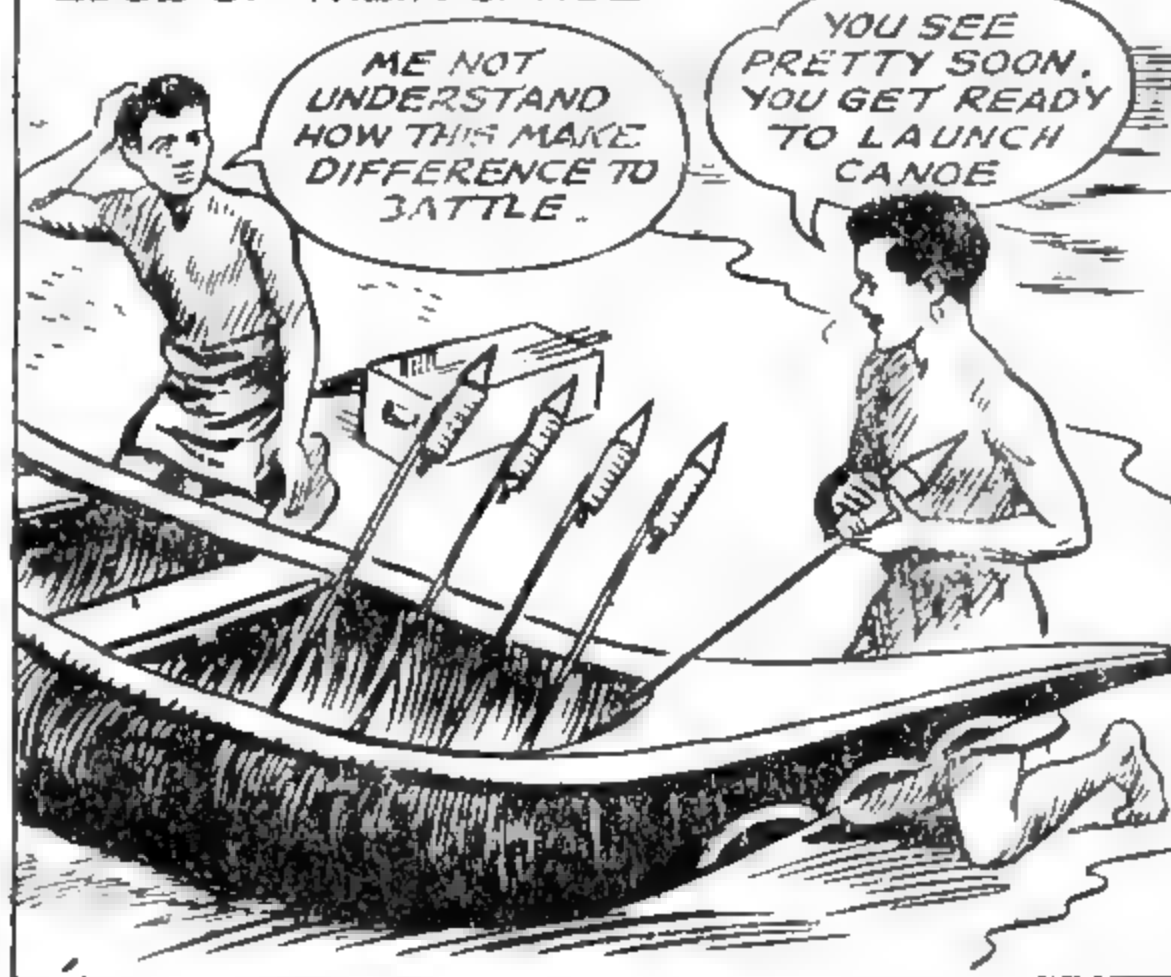
OUR WARRIORS
STILL FIGHTING. BUT
ENEMY TOO STRONG.
WE JOIN IN MUCH
QUICK!

BEFORE LONG THEY WERE TEARING IN THE
DIRECTION OF THEIR CANOE



HURRY,
WANGI, OR WE BE
TOO LATE!

TO WANGI'S ASTONISHMENT, JULO BEGAN TO
PLACE THE SIGNAL ROCKETS ROUND THE
EDGE OF THEIR CANOE



ME NOT
UNDERSTAND
HOW THIS MAKE
DIFFERENCE TO
BATTLE.

YOU SEE
PRETTY SOON.
YOU GET READY
TO LAUNCH
CANOE

JULO NEXT LEAPT TO THE FIRE
AND GRABBED UP A
BURNING BRAND

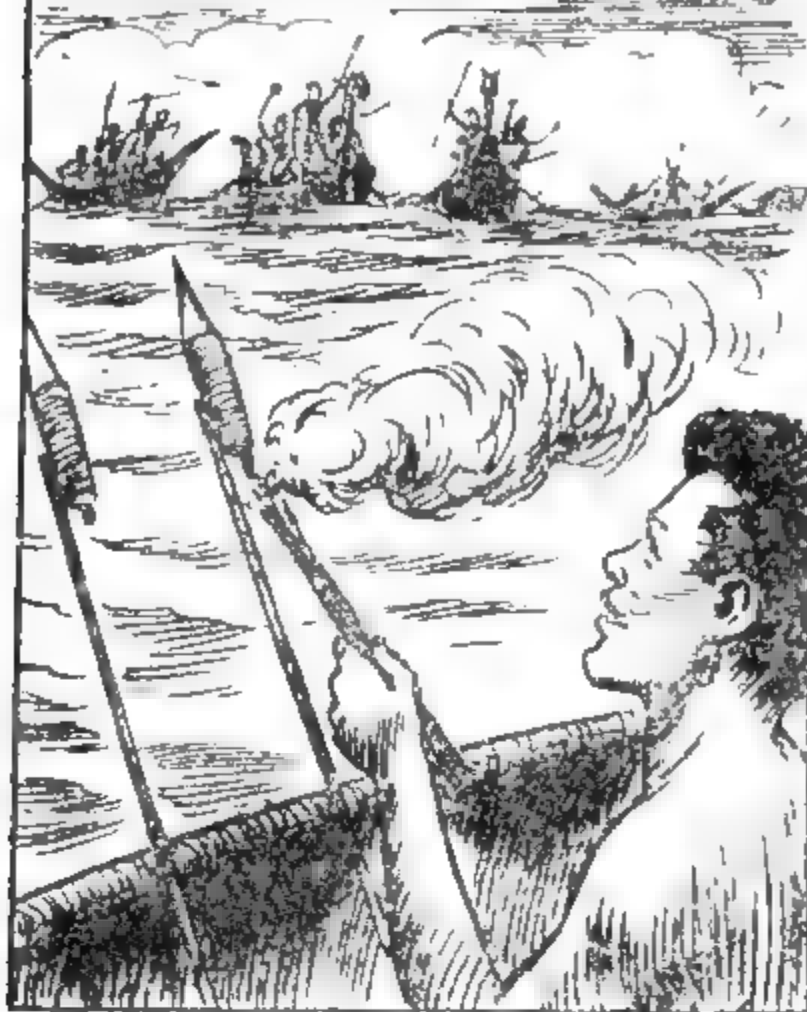


WITH THE BRAND WEDGED INTO THE STERN
OF THEIR CANOE, THE CHUMS PADDED TO
THE AID OF THEIR COMRADES



FASTER,
WANGI, FASTER!
WE MUST SAVE OUR
CHIEF AND HIS
WARRIORS

AND WHEN THEY WERE CLOSE ENOUGH--



WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR, THE ROCKETS TORE THROUGH THE AIR, AND THEN BURST SHATTERINGLY AMONG THE ENEMY



FILLED WITH TERROR, THE INVADERS TURNED TAIL AND PADDOLED AWAY FOR ALL THEY WERE WORTH



AS JULO HASTENED THE ENEMY ALONG WITH PARTING SHOTS, HIS FELLOW ISLANDERS SHOUTED TRIUMPHANT WAR-CRIES



THE WARRIORS AND THE CHUMS RETURNED TO THE BEACH, AND THERE THE CHIEF AND THE WITCH-DOCTOR STEPPED FORWARD. WANGI TURNED NERVOUSLY TO JULO



BUT WANGI NEED NOT HAVE WORRIED. FOR THE CHIEF SMILED AT THEM PROUDLY



MARCUS HUNTS THE VANISHING WOLVES

BY
RAY
MARR



THE MENACE OF THE WOLVES

A CROSS the open plain to the south of Rome strode Marcus the young hunter. His bow was in his hand, and his arrows rested in the quiver slung between his shoulder blades.

"By Jupiter!" he murmured as his sandalled feet carried him swiftly towards the farm of his older brother, Gaius. "I have never seen the country so bare of game. I had reckoned on at least a hare to carry to the Farm. I like not to go empty-handed."

As he entered a wood, beyond which lay Gaius's farm, he pictured the surprise on his brother's face when they met, for Marcus had given no warning of his coming.

Marcus notched an arrow to his bow as he entered the wood, hoping to see something to shoot at—a rabbit or partridge, perhaps, or even a bustard.

But there was no sign of life in the wood. It seemed that every beast and bird had deserted the countryside. As he reached the far side of the wood, his short tunic of home-spun wool caught in a thorn and he halted to release it. As he did so, he looked down across his brother's fields.

Suddenly his eyes widened with alarm. With a jerk he snatched his tunic from the thorn and raced forward.

In the field ahead his brother's black cattle were racing around madly, while at their heels two lean grey shapes snapped fiercely.

"Wolves!" gasped Marcus. "No wonder there is no game about."

A calf tripped and fell, and in a moment the wolves were at its throat. Marcus drew his bow, but before he could loose a shaft, a frantic cow swung round and lunged at the wolves with her horns, right in Marcus's line of fire.

The hunter raced forward, knowing from experience what the wolves would do next. As he had expected, one of the wolves attacked the cow, racing at her, snarling fiercely, then backing away just beyond the reach of the lunging horns.

As the cow charged the wolf, the second wolf raced in behind her back, fangs gleaming as it jumped at the frightened calf, which was scrambling to its feet.

Still on the run, Marcus raised his bow, aimed, and loosed his arrow. His fingers snatched another arrow from his quiver before the first had finished its flight.

With an angry snarl the wolf swung around, snapping as the arrow cut across its back. The shaft would have pierced its heart had not the calf,

He Unmasks a Roman Racketeer—by Acting as Bait for Wild Animals!

on which the wolf's forepaws were resting, collapsed to the ground, forcing the wolf down with it.

The other wolf had now drawn the cow far enough away. It side-stepped a furious charge and raced towards Marcus.

Twang!

The bow-string parted suddenly. It had been frayed by the same thorn bush that had trapped Marcus's tunic. The arrow dropped harmlessly to the ground.

The wolf was now only a few yards away. Swiftly Marcus flashed out his broad-bladed hunting knife.

As the wolf sprang, he dived forward under the menacing fangs, striking upwards with his knife. The blade jarred on a rib and was torn from his grasp.

The wolf spun around as it hit the ground. Snarling with the pain of the gash from the knife it hurled itself at Marcus again.

From a corner of his eye, Marcus saw the second wolf racing towards him from behind. There was no time for him to get to his feet.

As the first wolf sprang, his hands shot out and seized it by the throat. Desperately he kicked upwards with his feet. The next moment the wolf was thrown over Marcus's head, crashing into the other as it raced to the spot.

In that perilous moment Marcus recalled something an old hunter had once told him. Wolves were always suspicious of anything new or unexpected.

"Jupiter guard me!" Marcus breathed.

He leaped towards the wolves as they sorted themselves out.

As he sprang he curled himself into a tight ball, wrapping his arms around his knees. Rolling over and over he swept towards the wolves. As he did so, he gave a strident, high-pitched howl.

One of the wolves gave a yelp of fear as it saw this strange new antagonist. Neither of them had ever seen anything like this before, and it appeared to them that this strange new foe had already disposed of the man who had stood there!

Snarling angrily, the wolves loped away from Marcus. At the edge of the field they halted to howl hungrily. Then, as another figure approached, they vanished into the trees.

Breathing heavily, Marcus rose to his feet.

"That was well done brother," said a deep voice.

Marcus swung round. His brother Gaius also breathing heavily, was leaning on his spear at the side of the field.

MESSENGERS OF MERCURY

"I HEARD the wolves," said Gaius. "I came with all speed, but if it had not been for you I would have been too late. The calf would have been dead. My thanks, Marcus."

The young hunter grinned.

"And my thanks to you, Gaius," he answered.

"If you had not come when you did the wolves might have discovered my little plan."

He frowned.

"I have never known wolves to come down to the plains in this season," he went on. "They should be in the mountain forests all the summer."

"I know nothing of that, for I am no hunter," Gaius growled. "Yet the priest of Mercury warned me that evil would befall if I did not make a greater offering to the temple. I told him I was a poor man, but he said Mercury would be angered if I did not give more, and would wreak evil on me. And so it seems that it was Mercury who sent the wolves."

"Surely the priest of Mercury is a kindly man," said Marcus. "He was always grateful for whatever was given him."

Gaius shook his shaggy head.

"He has changed of late," he answered. "Always he demands more and more. Gold and Silver is all his interest these last few weeks. When he does not receive it, he threatens Mercury's vengeance."

His voice dropped.

"There are others like me, unable or unwilling to pay more, and to each of them has come this visitation of the wolves of Mercury."

"Wolves of Mercury!" Marcus snorted. "They seemed to me very like wolves of the wild woods. I know not what has driven them down from the hills, but——"

"Nay brother," Gaius shook his head. "These are no ordinary wolves. They attack only the farms of those who have not made big offerings to the priest."

"That could be chance," said Marcus.

"Is it chance then that no one can track them down?" asked Gaius. "Many of us have sought to track the wolves but always we have come to a point where the tracks vanish. It is as if Mercury himself had stooped from the clouds to lift them from our sight."

Marcus was impressed by his brother's obvious belief that the wolves were supernatural. Yet he was sure there was some understandable explanation.

"Perhaps farmers might lose the tracks where a hunter would still see them," he suggested. "If it please you, brother, I will endeavour to follow the wolves. They are cruel and evil brutes, and I never regret killing a wolf."

He fumbled in the pouch at his waist for a new bow-string, and fitted it to his bow.

He made his way to the edge of the field where the wolves had vanished.

Blood from the two light wounds Marcus had given the wolves made the trails easy to follow at

first. Marcus loped along steadily through the wood his eyes constantly on the alert.

The trails led towards the main highway. Then, suddenly, as they reached it, they stopped!

Marcus crossed the road, wondering if by any chance the wolves had somehow got across without leaving a trail. But there was no sign beyond the road.

Marcus halted uncertainly. Had Mercury indeed stooped to carry off the wolves? He bent to examine the paw marks in the dust, and saw that they ended just where the tracks of a cart passed down the road.

On hands and knees he examined the cart's tracks.

"Yes," he breathed. "That's it. That's the answer. The tracks are just a little deeper from here on. The cart was carrying extra weight, the weight of the wolves."

He stared at where the hooves of the bullock drawing the cart had left their marks.

"The cart was waiting here for some time," he mused. "The bullock champed a little at the ground. But why was it waiting? Did the driver know the wolves would come here? But how could he know? And what kind of a man waits for hunting wolves?"

Then his nostrils picked up a faint, familiar scent. He scooped a handful of dust from the road and held it to his nose.

"Valerian!" he gasped.

Now he knew beyond any shadow of doubt how the wolves had been guided, for he knew wolves, like dogs, will always follow the scent of valerian.

"So now to find the man who is friendly with wolves," he said grimly.

He rose to his feet and began to lope along on the trail of the cart track. But long before he reached the end of the trail, Marcus had guessed where it would lead.

The wolves had struck only at certain farms. That meant that they had been guided to those farms by a trail of valerian. The farms where they had struck had been those whose owners refused to make greater offerings to the priest of Mercury.

Old Apulius, the priest of Mercury, must have unloosed the scourge of the countryside!

"I can hardly believe it," Marcus thought. "Old Apulius was always so kindly and generous. What evil has entered into his heart?"

Yet he could see now that the tracks of the cart led straight to the small temple of Mercury.

But the temple was empty, and the priest's house was locked. Marcus thought he could hear a faint sound of muffled movement from within, but it was faint so that he could not be sure.

Then he noticed that there was no bullock cart in the temple yard.

"He has gone," said Marcus as he followed the tracks.

His face suddenly tightened. The tracks led towards his brother's farm.

They ran along a narrow winding road through a thickly wooded valley. It was not the direct route, but he reflected that Apulius would not want to go the direct way.

"He plans to strike again at Gaius," he muttered angrily as he raced along the narrow road.

He halted for a second to examine a clump of grass which had been crushed by the cart's wheel. From the way it was sprung back erect, Marcus knew the cart must have passed some time before. It would be well ahead. He thought for a moment and swung off the road.

A TRAP FOR AN IMPOSTOR

BY cutting across country, he would be able to save time. A marsh, which the cart would not cross, lay between the road and Gaius's farm. Springing from tussock to tussock, Marcus crossed the marsh. At its edge he saw a clump of valerian. Almost without stopping he plucked a small bundle of the flowers. Then he hurried towards the farm.

Gaius was about to drive his sheep into one of the farther fields when Marcus arrived. Gaius's face was grim.

"Apulius has been here again," he rumbled. "He wanted more money, and threatened that if I did not pay, Mercury's vengeance would be swift."

"Not so swift as ours may be," said Marcus.

Quickly he explained what he had discovered.

Gaius's face grew dark with anger.

"Wait till I drive these sheep into the field. Then we will settle matters with this priest."

"If you value your sheep, keep them here," said Marcus. "Now show me where Apulius stood."

He sniffed at the ground where Gaius pointed. The faint scent of valerian came to his nostrils. He followed the scent to the field where the sheep were to have been penned.

"Apulius came this way," he said.

"Why, yes," Gaius stared at his young brother. "How did you know? He said my grass was good. I said it should be, for I had prepared it to pasture my sheep and fatten them."

Marcus nodded.

"He had it in mind to fatten his wolves on your sheep," he said. "He laid a trail of valerian straight to the field. Doubtless he had an essence of the flowers soaked into the skirt of his robes which he dragged along the ground. Now hark ye, Gaius. Here is what we shall do."

Slowly a grin spread over the face of the farmer as he listened to his younger brother's plan.

While Marcus set off at a run across the farm, still carrying the bundle of valerian, Gaius set to work to build a rough cage. Swiftly he nailed slats of

wood to a frame of heavier timber. There was a door in each end of the cage when he had completed it. He hauled it to a thicket where it was partly concealed by the branches.

Gaius had hardly finished when he heard the eerie howl of a hungry wolf. Despite himself he shivered. Looking across the sheep field he saw Marcus sprinting towards the farm buildings, followed by two wolves!

Grasped in the young hunter's hand was the small bunch of recently plucked valerian. Being fresher, the scent of the flowers was stronger than the trail which the priest had left. The wolves followed it.

As the wolves raced across the field, they sighted the flying figure of the young hunter. They gave tongue and doubled their speed. Risking a glance over his shoulder, Marcus saw they were scarcely a hundred yards behind him.

Marcus had not expected this. His intention had been to lay his valerian trail and then get away quickly. But the wolves had picked up the scent quicker than he had expected.

Marcus realised he was running for his life, and he pulled the last reserves of strength from his tiring muscles. His legs fairly skimmed the ground. It seemed to him that he could feel the hot breath of the wolves upon his heels.

The cage was just ahead.

Marcus dived for it, raced through it—and out of the other end!

As the wolves raced after him, intent on their prey, the rear door was slammed sharply in their faces. Fearing a trap, the wolves snarled and bit at each other as they tried to turn and get out by the way they had entered. They were too late. Gaius slammed the other door shut even as they sprang towards it.

The wolves were trapped!

"Now," said Marcus breathlessly, "we can have a talk with the priest of Mercury."

Gaius rubbed his huge, powerful hands.

"We will have more than a talk," he rumbled.

Three hours later, the heavy wooden cart from Gaius's farm creaked its way into the yard of the temple of Mercury. Another cart already stood there.

The door of the priest's house opened, and, clad in his long yellow robe and hood, the priest emerged. Marcus's eyes narrowed as the man walked towards them. There was something strange about the priest's walk—and yet something that was vaguely familiar.

"Hail, Gaius," came the priest's hollow voice. "Have you repented of your evil decision? Has Mercury chastised you and brought you to your senses? Have you brought gold?"

"Not gold," replied Gaius. "But I have in my cart something that has brought much gold to another."

The priest walked towards the cart, his curiosity aroused. Gaius suddenly whipped off the canvas coverings.

Beneath the covering was a crate, and in the crate were the wolves! The priest of Mercury started back in alarm as the wolves snarled. His face went white.

"What means this?" he demanded harshly.

Marcus spoke for the first time.

"It means," he said, "that your knavery has come to an end, Croton—Keeper of the Beasts!"

With a bellow of rage the man snatched for a knife in his girdle, but his hand never reached the hilt. Marcus's leap was swifter than that of a wolf. For a moment there was a flurry of arms and legs, then the man in priest's robes was sprawling on the ground, his face in the dust. Marcus sat astride—in triumph.

"Marcus," Gaius gasped in horror, "Are you mad? Know you not that to strike a priest is death?"

"Priest!" Marcus snorted. "This is no priest. Heard you not the name I called him? This is Croton, who was Keeper of the Beasts at the great arena in Rome. Then many months ago he vanished, and with him went two wolves he had trained to obey him, and also much money from the arena treasury!"

"Then where is Apulius, the priest?" Gaius demanded. "By Mercury, if he has harmed the old man I'll see——"

"Croton is no murderer" said Marcus. "He has not the courage for that. When I was here before I heard a faint sound from within the house. I think Apulius will be found imprisoned there."

It was not long before his words were proved true. The old priest told them how Croton had come begging at the door. When Apulius took him in, Croton waited his chance, then struck down the old man, and locked him in the cellar. He forced the old man to speak to him, so that he could learn to imitate his voice. And no one ever saw his face because of the deep hood worn by all the priests of Mercury.

Hidden away in the house, Marcus found a store of gold and silver which had been extorted from the farmers by Croton.

"That can be returned to its rightful owners," Marcus said. "As for Croton, he must be sent to Rome. There are people there who will know how to deal with him—and his wolves."

THE END

These BIKES BEAT the BAND!



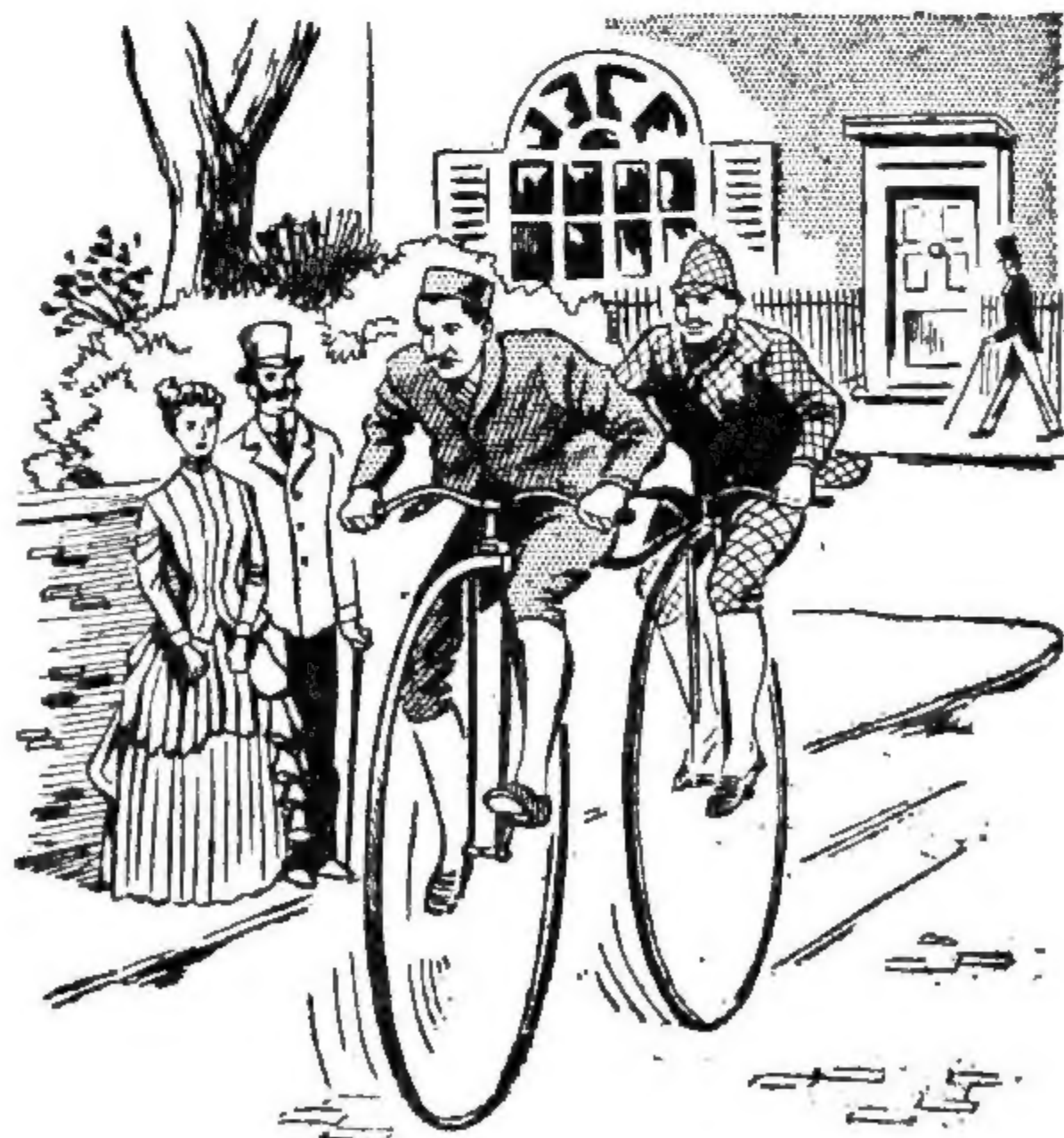
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